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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the perceptions of a wide range of citizens and to inform the Mississippi Legislature on the issue of merit pay in education. From each of 50 randomly selected Mississippi school districts, a representation of grades K through 12 was chosen, with all professional and administrative staff members asked to respond to an opinionnaire consisting of 13 statements and 2 open ended items. All the members of 30 civic clubs within the selected districts and the entire population of the Mississippi Legislature were included in the mailing. Merit pay is defined as paying educators with the same degree and experience a higher salary based on predetermined criteria. Data were subjected to statistical analysis. Statements favoring merit pay received positive support from legislators and civic club members, whereas administrators and teachers did not support merit pay. It is observed that the position of educators on the issue of merit pay has not been clearly presented to the general public. Consequently, better communication between these two groups through public forums, media, or other methods is suggested as a means of overcoming the negative impression created by the issue. Included in the study are 16 tables and 21 references. The appendices, which occupy more than half the document, consist of the questionnaire and participants' responses and comments. (WTH)

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PERCEPTIONS OF MISSISSIPPIANS

REGARDING

MERIT PAY FOR EDUCATORS

GCCAR

JANUARY 1987

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Perceptions Of Mississippians Regarding Merit Pay For Educators

A Research Study Conducted By

The Gulf Coast Center For

Applied Research

Bill E. Lee

118 Woodland Park Drive

Biloxi, Mississippi 39531

January 1987

Abstract

Almost 3000 Mississippians responded to an opinionnaire seeking to determine the perceptions of a wide range of people as to merit pay for educators. People were sampled in Education, Civic Clubs, and the entire membership of the Mississippi Legislature.

Fifty Mississippi School Districts were selected through a stratified random sample. After the districts were selected schools within the district were randomly selected until the entire range of grades K through 12 were included. All professional staff members of the selected schools were asked to participate. In addition, the administrative staff of school districts were polled.

Utilizing the fifty school districts as a population 30 civic clubs were chosen at random from 50 zip code areas of the school districts. All the members of the selected clubs were asked to participate.

The entire population (175) of the Mississippi Legislature was included in the mailing.

The opinionnaire was developed by the investigator in concert with two graduate research methodology classes and one graduate educational statistics class. A pilot was conducted at one elementary school, one civic club, and two graduate classes. The opinionnaire included 4 demographic items and 14 content items. Participants were asked to make comments on separate sheets of paper by numbering the item addressed in the comment.

Approximately 62 percent of the membership of the civic clubs responded (estimate) while 81 percent of the administrators (243) and 77 percent (nearly 2300) of the classroom teachers completed the instrument. Only 20 percent (35) of the legislators returned the opinionnaire. The small percentage of this group responding did not permit inference to the total population.

Statements favoring merit pay received positive support from legislators and civic club members while the opposite was true for administrators and teachers. There was a significant difference between teachers and administrators in the degree of acceptance when the statement posed "All educators, superintendents, principals, etc., should be evaluated for merit pay". Teachers felt more positive in that respect. Teachers were more in favor of merit pay if there were also an across the board raise than the alternative of all of the raise going for merit pay.

Age was not a factor in merit pay when those 43 and above were compared to those below 43. A Chi Square test found that there was a significant difference among educators, i.e., administrators and teachers on 11 of the 13 content statements. Most of these differences were due to differences in the degree favoring or not favoring. When educators and non-educators were tested by chi square results, there were 12 out of 13 significant differences. P in all cases of significance was .02 or less. Most of these differences were true differences in favoring or not favoring rather than differences in degree.

The study showed an obvious difference in the perceptions of educators and non-educators. If, in fact, educators are correct in their views, channels of communication should be opened between the legislature and private citizens. If the reverse is true, the importance is even more crucial.

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PERCEPTIONS OF MISSISSIPPIANS REGARDING MERIT PAY FOR EDUCATORS

A number of national commissions have been established in recent years to study the status of education and to make recommendations. A Nation At Risk, (1983), a publication developed by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, has probably had more influence than have all others combined, at least in the period of the last ten years. One of the most important recommendations that came for the Commission was:

> Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.

Armed with the above recommendation, a number of public and private groups and/or individuals began the task of interpreting the contents of item number 2, the cited recommendation. The term "merit" is noticeably absent from the quotation above.

Gross and Gross, (1985), edited The Great School Debate, wherein several of the national studies have been summarized. There were nine reports summarized in this publication, however, no attempt will be made to report the findings of each in this study, but commonalities and/or differences will be cited. A profile of the reports was made by the Northeast Regional Exchange. The list is as follows: Academic Preparation for College addressing the topic "What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do"; Action for Excellence, "A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools"; America's Competitive Challenge, "The Need for a National Response"; High School, "A Report on Secondary Education in America"; Making the Grade, "No subtopic"; A Nation at Risk, "An Educational Manifesto"; A Place Called School, "Prospects for the Future"; and A Study of High Schools, "No subtopic".

All of the nine reports published had representatives from nationally recognized scholar-citizens. Sponsors ranged from the Carnegie Foundation to public organizations, e.g. the National Association of Secondary School Principals. All of the reports were completed from 1982 through 1984.

Based primarily on the national report A Nation at Risk, the Legislature of the State of Mississippi enacted the Education Reform Act of 1982. This act was summarized in An Opportunity for Excellence, (1983), a report of the Task Force for Educational Excellence in Mississippi, and funded by the Phil Hardin Foundation. The enaction of legislation to carry out the recommendations of the Foundations gave the Mississippi Legislature the opportunity to apply some accountability provisions in the pay raise appropriation supporting the Act. The third year of the pay raise (1987-88) required that some provision of merit pay be attached to the $1000 increase.

There was no attempt made by the Legislature to ascertain how the general public, school administrators, or by the people affected most, the classroom teachers, would perceive the initiation of merit pay.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to determine the perceptions of a wide range of citizens on the topic of merit pay. Since the State Department of Education had to interpret the legislation, with little or no guidelines, the intent was further designed to provide the data obtained to the Committee responsible for implementing the plan. The Opinionnaire was distributed and returned prior to the public announcement of the committee appointments and the subsequent adoption of the instrument to be used in the process.

The Summer (1986) issue of the Journal of the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators issues a clear indictment of the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI), reportedly used with some adjustments for the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Inventory (MTAI). The publication, quoting the people responsible for developing the TPAI stated that using this instrument to evaluate experienced teachers indicates that persons doing so "must not realize how restricted the assessments made by the TPAI really are. They have unintentionally placed too much faith in its ability to assess teacher effectiveness". While the final plan developed by the Mississippi State Department of Education was, in fact, substantially an "across the board" increase with a net result of eliminating a small percentage of teachers from increases, one must anticipate that future raises will contain some form of merit pay. Perhaps the results of this study will make some contribution to that effort.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be solved in this study was to determine the perceptions of a variety of Mississippians toward merit pay for educators within the State.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant differences among educators as to perceptions toward merit pay.

2. There will be no significant differences between educators and legislators/citizens as to perceptions toward merit pay.

3. Areas where people live will have no significant difference as to perceptions toward merit pay for educators.

4. Age will not be a factor in the perceptions for merit pay.

Definition of Terms

Merit pay is defined as paying educators with the same degree and experience a higher salary based on predetermined criteria.

"Other" refers to people who reside in school districts other than county units or municipals, e.g. consolidated, line, and the like.

SDE refers to the State Department of Education.

Basic Assumptions

It was assumed that those responding would do so honestly and conscientiously.

It was further assumed that by random selection, inferring to the population was justified.

Limitations

The small number of legislators responding (35) prevented inferences to the total legislative bodies.

No claim is made to inferences to the general population, however, by matching civic clubs to randomly selected districts, it is felt that responses from those clubs do properly represent the population of the civic clubs.

Delimitations

Public schools, legislators, and selected matched civic clubs, represented the populations polled within the State of Mississippi.

Significance of the Study

The study was developed for the purpose of obtaining the views of a wide range of Mississippians on the vital topic of merit pay. Since a law has been passed decreeing the implementation of merit pay, it seems appropriate to debate the "how" it should take place. It is hoped that this study will spark enough debate to incorporate a wider range of suggestions and prevent the deterioration of morale in the public schools.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Merit pay is an old idea. Lake Forest, Illinois has the oldest merit pay plan, with a beginning date of 1861. The next recorded merit pay plan for teachers was established in Newton, Massachusetts in 1908 (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983). In 1918, 48 percent of U. S. School districts sampled in one study used compensation systems that they called merit pay. Little is known about these early plans, except that most did not last (Murname & Cohen, 1986). After World War I school administrators across the country applied Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management to education and tried to make their schools more rigorous, efficient, and businesslike (Murname & Cohen, 1986).

In 1923 the National Education Association reported that 33 percent of sampled districts used merit pay and a subsequent NEA survey reported that 18 percent of districts surveyed awarded merit pay. However, by the 1930's single salary schedules were adopted in an attempt to end the disparity between elementary and secondary teachers' salaries. Those with similar experience and training would be rewarded equally. This continued through the 1940's (Johnson, 1984).

Interest in merit pay for teachers revived in the mid-1950's after the Russians launched Sputnik and so many curricular reforms came about (Murname & Cohen, 1986). Many states adopted legislation pertaining to merit pay. Use of merit pay stabilized around 10 percent in the 1960's, but it declined again in the 1970's (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

By 1972 the number of districts using merit pay had fallen to 5.5 percent. A 1978 survey of the 11,500 U. S. school districts with enrollments of 300 or more found only 115 with merit pay plans (that is, 4 percent of the districts that responded to the survey and 1 percent of the districts to whom the questionnaire was sent) (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

In A Nation at Risk (published in April 1983) the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended that superior teachers be rewarded (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, and Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983). President Reagan endorsed merit pay for teachers in a commencement address in May 1983. "Teachers should be paid and promoted on the basis of their merit and competence", the President said. This helped re-focus national attention on educational reform, including merit pay (Mississippi State Department of Education, 1985).

Here in Mississippi Governor William Winter is credited with spearheading educational reform in the state. His Education Reform Act of 1982 called for raising the average Mississippi teacher's salary to the southeastern U. S. average. By August 1, 1984, the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification, and Development was to develop a plan for a program to "encourage and financially reward teachers, administrators, and other certified personnel" (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

This was not the very first time that merit pay had ever been tried in Mississippi. From 1958 until 1974 Gulfport Municipal Separate School District had a merit pay program. There was one from 1966 until 1970 in Columbus (Porwoll, 1979). Madison County also had a merit pay plan that started in 1968 (Porwoll, 1979).

Florida's Educational Reform Act of 1983 created a council to study the issue and propose a statewide merit pay plan in 1984, thus heralding the first statewide merit pay system in the United States (Florida State Department of Education, 1985).

Public Opinion And Opinion Of Teachers Regarding Merit Pay

Phi Delta Kappa conducted a survey of the public and the teaching community in 1982 regarding numerous issues in education, among them teacher pay. Only 52 percent of the general public thought that low salaries were a reason for leaving the teaching profession while teachers ranked that reason at 87 percent. Nine out of ten teachers say that teacher salaries are too low. However, the public is divided almost evenly on the question of whether teacher salaries are too low or about right. American teachers oppose the idea of merit pay by a 2-1 ratio, 64 percent to 32 percent. This ratio is consistent across all the major teacher population subgroups (Figure 3) (Gallup, 1984). A 1971 NEA Teacher Opinion Poll had previously shown a similar finding (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

Teachers oppose merit pay for two basic reasons: (1) the difficulty of evaluating teacher performance and (2) the moral problems that merit pay might cause. Although U. S. teachers tend to oppose merit pay, three-quarters of them say that some teachers in their two schools deserve merit pay. Almost two-thirds of the U. S. teachers (63 percent) say that a committee of teachers should determine which teachers receive merit pay. Next most frequently mentioned as potential decision maker is the school principal (57 percent), followed by a committee of outside educators (42 percent). Only about one teacher is five wants the decision to be made either by students or parents.

The views of the public differ dramatically from those of teachers on the issue of merit pay. The public favors merit pay for teachers by a ratio of 4-1. Two thirds of the public (68 percent) believe that academic achievement or the improvement of student performance as measured by

standardized tests should be one of the criteria used to determine which teachers receive merit pay. Only 39 percent of the teachers agree. Sixty-six percent of the teachers feel that other teachers in the system should be involved in the evaluation of teachers for merit pay, while 48 percent of the public agree (Figure 4) (Gallup, 1984).

Arguments For Merit Pay

Merit pay is consistent with the tenets of free enterprise. Teachers, like others in our society, should have the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential and to be rewarded for their accomplishments. The single salary scale rewards teachers for their graduate coursework and longevity, but not for their effectiveness as instructors.

Merit pay would keep better teachers in education while dissuading ineffective teachers from remaining. It would increase the likelihood that good teachers would feel appreciated. The opportunity to earn additional income would serve as an incentive to remain in teaching.

Merit pay would stimulate teachers to be critical of their own work and would promote healthy competition. Teacher tenure and the single salary scale guarantee security but do not promote teachers' ongoing assessment of their work. Because teachers would be aware that competitive pay systems reward only selected teachers, they would be attentive to the accomplishments of their colleagues and would themselves strive to excel.

Taxpayers would more willingly support public education if teachers were paid according to their performance. When taxpayers are asked to support school levies they often argue that they are being asked to pay more for mediocre, unsatisfactory services. If merit pay were instituted and teachers were paid for what they produce, citizens might more

readily accept tax increases. More rigorous efforts by educators to increase productivity, and thus to demonstrate that they are frugal with the tax dollar, would be rewarded by increased public support.

Merit pay would create conditions more like those prevailing in other professions, such as law, medicine, and dentistry, where status and income depend upon ability, industry, and competence.

Arguments Against Merit Pay

No consistent, reliable, valid method of evaluating teacher performance has been discovered.

Merit pay is self-perpetuating. It is not easy to criticize a plan when one's salary is dependent upon it.

Evidences of excellent teaching often are not immediately apparent nor measurable. There is no agreement about what good teaching is or how to measure it.

Competitive pay undermines teacher morale and compromises congeniality. It is potentially destructive. If teachers are competing for scarce rewards, they will be less trusting and less likely to share their ideas and materials.

Merit pay rewards a few teachers but does not raise the general level of teaching. Through proper pre-service elimination and proper supervision of beginning teachers, the incompetents can be weeded out.

The public has already demonstrated a willingness to pay more for teachers with greater amounts of college education and experience. The correlation between good teaching and college preparation or experience is as great or greater than that between good teaching and the ratings used in most merit systems.

Merit rating discourages creative or experimental teaching and thereby tends to standardize teachers rather than promote excellence. Teachers will not feel free to question administrative judgments and decisions under such a program.

Parents will not want their children taught by non-merit teachers (Robinson, 1983, and Porwoll, 1979).

Teacher Organization Opinions

Historically both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) have opposed any form of merit or incentive pay for teachers. Carl J. Megel of AFT cited several reasons for AFT's opposition. Some of these were:

- The true effectiveness of a teacher cannot be fairly rated.
- Rating for merit pay encourages conformity.
- Merit ratings encourage the teacher to remain silent about problems and the need for assistance out of fear that such questions may jeopardize an otherwise favorable rating.
- Merit ratings foster competition, rather than cooperation.
- Merit ratings undermine the security of teachers.
- Merit ratings pay no heed to the environment in which the teacher works and schools are seldom equal even within the same district.
- Merit pay doesn't improve the quality of education since most teachers are against it (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

Also, Albert Shanker of the AFT in 1983 pointed out that merit pay has failed in the past because teachers have viewed it as "politics and patronage rather than pedagogy" (Shanker, 1985).

The NEA has traditionally opposed plans to reward teachers on the basis of the quality of their teaching. Again, politics and patronage were cited as reasons merit pay hadn't worked before (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

Recently, however, both unions have found the merit pay issue more acceptable. Albert Shanker stated that AFT would be willing to accept a merit pay plan if three conditions were met: (1) if evaluations were made by somebody that teachers had confidence in; (2) if the proposal did not establish a "super salary for some people to keep the majority of teachers at a low salary"; and (3) if the proposal actually helped teachers teach or helped the school perform in a better way (Shanker, 1985).

NEA also put conditions on what it was willing to consider in merit pay plans. Willard McGuire, past president of NEA, said that NEA would consider any fair and equitable salary proposal. He suggested that a clear definition of merit pay and clear directions on how it was to be implemented were needed.

Research indicates that when teacher organizations and school management cooperate in implementing a merit pay plan for teachers, the results can be positive. Teachers' organizations have been found to be a positive poser to assure checks and balances within the system and work with the administration to make constructive bargaining possible (Calhoun & Protheroe, 1983).

Evaluation Procedures

Research shows that conventional evaluation procedures are almost universally based on process or input factors. This is sometimes referred to as "old style" merit pay. Typically these process or input factors are

contained in a check list type instrument used by the evaluators to rate the teacher on items such as:

- Knowledge of subject matter
- Preparation and planning
- Use of instructional techniques
- Classroom management
- Use of oral and written English
- Pupil-teacher relationships
- Staff relations
- Public relations
- Professional attitudes
- Professional growth

"New style" merit pay bases individual teacher's merit pay bonuses on their students' test score gains. There are only a few documented cases of school districts that have used new style merit pay, although merit pay plans that compensate teachers on the basis of student test score gains have recently been supported by several state legislatures. There are arguments for and against both methods. The attractiveness of paying teachers based on student scores solves the evaluation problem by actually measuring certain dimensions of each teacher's output. The subjective quality of evaluations conducted under old style merit pay is avoided (Murname & Cohen).

Compensating teachers on the basis of test scores is comparable to manufacturing goods on a piece-rate system. Piece rate contracts elicit opportunistic behavior. For example, garment workers might strive to make as many garments as possible to be paid well, but neglect other duties such as routine maintenance of their sewing machine. Evidence

indicates that teachers who are awarded for good overall test scores by their class, tend to concentrate their time on children in the middle ability group, neglecting those at the top who would advance well on their own, and those at the bottom, whose test scores would not respond to modest additional amounts of teacher time (Shannon, 1986).

While it may be reasonable to attribute progress toward certain goals, such as raising reading scores, to individual teachers working behind closed classroom doors, it is not possible to measure each teacher's contribution to the attainment of other school goals. Teachers work as a team. Individual teacher's contributions to achieving school goals (such as lowering the level of drugs in the school) cannot play a role in determining there compensation under new style merit pay (Murname & Cohen, 1986).

Under the old style merit pay system the major problem is the imprecise nature of the activity of teaching. Principals cannot clearly define why one teacher is good and another is not. Neither can they suggest specific actions that the teacher can undertake so the principal can recognize their effectiveness. When more objective criteria were developed, they tended to produce an adversarial atmosphere with the principal and their was a likelihood for teachers to conceal problems.

Why Some Merit Pay Plans Have Failed

There is evidence which shows that merit pay plans in different school systems and at different times have failed for a number of the same reasons. Rhodes cited some of the basic flaws common to unsuccessful merit pay programs. They are:

1. Insufficient discrimination among teachers.

2. Artificial cutoffs on the number who could receive merit recognition, thus sometimes arbitrarily denying recognition to deserving teachers.
3. Poor evaluators.
4. Lack of clearly understood goals.
5. Lack of a clear definition of the job. Good job descriptions are an important part of a good merit plan.
6. Lack of an effective evaluation instrument. Some are too simple and invite a subjective approach.
7. Inability to measure results. Most merit systems look at the way a teacher acts, rather than the results the teacher produces.
8. Inability to translate evaluation into improved instruction.
9. Inadequate financial incentive. A merit stipend which represents only a small increment beyond that which one would normally receive for minimum performance is not geared to stimulate or give real recogniton to to teachers.
10. Too limited a concept of merit. If only a few teachers are to gain recogniton of any type of salary advancement from a merit plan, obviously the plan will not be popular with the majority of teachers.

Davis also lists the sense of injustice created by the merit awards and opposition of teacher organizations as reasons why plans have failed. In addition, Robinson considered the initiation of merit pay programs without the consent of the teachers, as a valid reason why some programs had failed (Porwoll, 1979, and Robinson, 1983).

Criteria For Successful Merit Pay Plans

The Education Research Service compiled a list of guidelines and suggestions for making merit pay a success:

1. The primary objective of any merit plan must be to improve instruction. It can't be used to penalize poor or unsatisfactory teachers or be based on popularity.
2. Input for developing the plan should come from many sources, including teachers, administrators, the school board, and the community. Past practice has shown that attempts to mandate a merit pay plan upon teachers, by either local or legislative action, have failed completely.
3. An atmosphere of confidence, respect, honesty, and trust must exist among the persons involved in the plan.
4. There should be no discrepancies between administrative practices and the principle of merit. Administrators must give the plan high priority.
5. Before the plan is actually begun, thorough research is necessary to pinpoint problem areas that have hampered or defeated merit pay plans in other school systems.
6. There should be no limit to the number of teachers who can qualify for merit pay. Eligibility for the plan must be based on recognized predetermined standards, not on artificially established quotas or percentages.
7. The plan must be evaluated continually so that problems can be identified and corrections made.
8. It takes time to establish a merit pay plan. The process shouldn't be rushed.

9. Provisions should be made for continuing the plan from year to year.
10. After the plan has been in operation, its rationale and applications should be carefully explained to new teachers.
11. School boards act as policy makers only. They should not interfere with the operation of the plan after it has begun.
12. Evaluation standards should distinguish superior teachers. They should reflect what actually takes place in the classroom. Teachers should know the criteria that will be used and should not be rated against the performance of others.
13. Merit rating should be carried out continuously by a team of evaluators, rather than irregularly by a single evaluator (Porwoll, 1979).

Merit Pay In Mississippi

Dr. Ralph Brewer of the State Department of Education says that what everyone is calling "merit pay" here in Mississippi is actually a base pay increase. In the near future a real merit pay program is to be established to award outstanding teachers (Brewer, 1986).

Teachers in Mississippi will be evaluated for this based pay increase using the Mississippi Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (MTAI). It is the same instrument used in evaluating beginning teachers. The building principal will administer this instrument twice during the school year. The fall assessment will be conducted between the sixth and twelfth weeks of school. The spring assessment will be conducted no sooner than 45 days after the fall assessment but prior to April 15.

The MTAI is divided into three main parts: Teaching Plans and Materials, Position Skills, and Interpersonal Skills. Each area has a set of

given competencies the teacher is supposed to exhibit along with the indicators that the evaluator looks for as evidence that the competency is being met.

Prior to assessment, teachers will be oriented to the sequence of events which constitutes the assessment process. At least 10 days in advance of assessment, expectations for a portfolio of plans covering a 7-10 day instructional unit must be clarified.

Each teacher will be questioned about his or her portfolio to aid the evaluators in understanding what the teacher will cover what will be taught, how it will be taught, and how the objectives of the lesson will be evaluated.

The MTAI score sheets will be mailed to the State Department of Education to be assessed and the school district will then be notified of those teachers who qualify for the raise in pay. Awards will be a matter of public record (Mississippi State Department of Education, 1985).

If the teacher doesn't qualify based on these first two evaluations, then evaluators from outside the district will be called in to evaluate the teacher. This is the only form of "appeal" the teacher will have. There is no true appeal process other than through the courts.

This evaluation is not optional. Every teacher who is to qualify for any kind of raise in pay, including increments for years of teaching and for additional college degrees will have to "pass" the MTAI evaluation. If they don't their salaries will be frozen until they do qualify. There is no quota or ceiling on how many teachers in a district may qualify for this base pay increase (Brewer, 1986).

Legal Aspects Of Merit Pay

Amendment Fourteen of the United States Constitution proclaims that citizens can't be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law. This would apply to the teaching profession when considering an evaluation where teaching performance is judged in consideration for merit pay (Lee, 1986). In order for a teacher to be assured due process in merit pay considerations three features must be included in the evaluation: (1) The teacher must be given notice of what is expected in his or her performance. (2) The evaluation criteria must related to an educational goal. (3) All teachers meeting the same evaluative criteria must be treated the same way concerning pay incentive.

In Florida alone there are over 100 due process cases pending in the courts for the 1984-1985 school term for teachers who didn't qualify for merit pay (Joyce, 1986, and Shaw, 1985).

METHODOLOGY

Almost 3000 Mississippians responded to an opinionnaire seeking their views on merit pay for public school educators. There were three distinct populations surveyed. The 153 school districts within the state, including all of the professionally certified personnel, were one target. The second population included the total membership of the Mississippi Legislature. The third population was made up of selected civic clubs from all over the state.

Samples

A stratified random sample of school districts was conducted with districts bordering U.S. Interstate 20, and those south thereof, serving as one group while all other districts composed the other group. Based on enrollment data in the Annual Report (1984-85) of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, it was determined that approximately 28 districts from the north and 22 districts from the south would best represent the 50 school districts selected in terms of proportion of professional personnel to be included. It was further determined that 50 districts would yield more than an adequate sample for statistical analysis. A microcomputer was used to randomly select the districts to be sampled. Zip codes of the administrative offices served to assist in determining demarcation points.

Subpopulations were established within the districts and designated thusly: Elementary----K-6

Secondary-----7-12

Administrative-Central office personnel and principals not selected in the random sample.

A hand calculator was used to randomly select schools within the district until the entire range of grades (K-12) had been chosen. The Directory (1984-85) of Schools prepared by the State Department of Education was used to make the selections.

The entire population of the Mississippi Legislature was included in the study.

Thirty civic clubs were selected from a statewide Directory by using the fifty selected school districts as a population. Civic clubs were matched by zip codes with school districts in the immediate area.

The Instrument

The Opinionnaire (Appendix A) was developed in concert with two graduate research methodology classes and one graduate introductory statistics class. The time frame included more than one year. The first draft was submitted by the investigator. Individual classes first completed the instrument and then submitted recommendations for additions, deletions, and revised questions. Demographic items were reduced to a minimum. Content questions were also restricted permitting respondents to complete the instrument within a reasonable time frame. Demographic data were to be completed by a check (X) mark or by short answer. Content answers were applied to a Likert type scale utilizing a check mark (X) in these categories:

5	Strongly Agree	(SA)
4	Agree	(A)
3	Neutral	(N)
2	Disagree	(D)
1	Strongly Disagree	(SD)

The final statement on the opinionnaire asked the participants to list two characteristics of the best public school teacher he/she had been under as a student. Additional comments were solicited on a separate sheet of paper with the items numbered as they related to the Instrument.

Pilot

An elementary school in Harrison County, the Biloxi (MS) Lions Club, and two graduate education classes made up the pilot study. The graduate classes were made up of approximately one half who were employed by public schools and the other half by private citizens working toward an Adult Education Degree, most of whom were engaged in activities outside of public education. As a result of the pilot studies, further refinements were made to the Instrument.

The results of the study were compared to the pilot studies. The Elementary pilot did not differ significantly from the K-6 sample.The Biloxi Lions Club when compared to the Civic Club Sample did not deviate (based on error range), on a single statement. The predictive validity of the pilots were well established.

There were a number of discrepancies when matching all educators with the graduate classes. Students who were teachers, administrators, or other educators followed the trend of their cohorts in education while noneducators tended, to answer, in general, in the same direction as civic club members. No pilot was made of legislators.

RESULTS

There were 175 civic club members (circa 62%) of those polled who responded to the opinionnaire. Thirty-five or (20%) of the legislators returned completed instruments. Since civic clubs were selected based on random selection or school districts, the results should be generalized to the population of civic clubs with the attending limitations. There were 243 administrators (81%) and nearly 2300 (77%) teachers who responded. The stratified random sample of districts permits the investigator to properly infer to these populations. The category listed as "other" represents educators who could not properly be categorized as K-6; 7-12; or administrators.

The 13 content statements are shown as follows: The categories of Strongly Agree (5) and the Agree (4) columns were combined to show AGREE; the No Opinion (3) column remained the same; and the Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) columns were combined to show DISAGREE.

Statement 1

The total salary increase for teachers in 1987-88 should be based on merit.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR	N SIZE
Teachers K-6	6.3%	3.3%	90.4%	2%	1034
Teachers 7-12	10.1	4.0	85.9	2	1167
Administrators	17.0	3.7	79.3	7	241
Legislators	68.6	0.0	31.4	a	35
Private Citizens	62.8	9.3	27.9	7	172
Other Educators	25.0	2.4	72.6	a	84

a Indicates an N size too small to compute an error factor for populations polled. The Error indicates that the true score should be within plus or minus of the given percentage with a 95% confidence level. Due to missing data the N size will differ on each question. The variation was so small in each instance that N size will not be given for the remaining tables in this report.

The response to Statement 1 indicates a polarization of answers between educators and noneducators.

Statement 2

A percentage of the total teacher pay raise should be made across the board and the rest should go for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	44.3%	5.6%	50.1%	4%
Teachers 7-12	47.9	7.9	44.2	4
Administrators	59.1	6.3	34.6	9
Legislators	28.6	17.1	54.3	a
Private Citizens	61.3	11.3	27.4	9
Other Educators	57.3	2.5	40.2	a

Each person was asked to respond to each statement independently of the others. More K-6 teachers disagreed with this concept than those who agreed. All other educators showed more agreement than disagreement as did the private citizens polled. The 35 legislators who responded were in disagreement. Statement 2 gained considerably more acceptance than did Statement 1.

Statement 3

Merit pay should apply to all professional personnel (teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.).

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	76.3%	4.8%	18.9%	3%
Teachers 7-12	72.8	5.0	22.2	3
Administrators	74.3	5.0	20.7	7
Legislators	80.0	11.4	8.6	a
Private Citizens	85.0	7.5	7.5	5
Other Educators	77.8	3.7	18.5	a

All of the professional groups agreed with Statement 3. Legislators and Private Citizens showed a higher percentage of agreement than all others.

Statement 4

The State Department of Education (SDE) should design the system for evaluating teachers for merit pay and apply it uniformly statewide.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	48.3%	8.4%	43.3%	4%
Teachers 7-12	48.6	8.1	43.3	4
Administrators	66.7	4.2	29.1	8
Legislators	91.4	0.0	8.6	a
Private Citizens	81.3	6.9	11.8	11.8
Other Educators	62.2	9.8	28.0	a

While all professionals show agreement with Statement 4, the level of agreement shows a broad range. Teachers slightly favor while administrators, legislators, and private citizens show a high degree of acceptability. The comments to this statement and to all others, shown in the appendix of the full report should be examined.

Statement 5

Local school districts should be allowed to design their own system for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	36.3%	6.4%	57.3%	4%
Teachers 7-12	28.0	9.2	62.8	4
Administrators	22.7	4.6	72.7	9
Legislators	3.0	6.1	90.9	a
Private Citizens	18.6	14.9	66.5	9
Other Educators	28.0	11.0	61.0	a

All professions disagreed with Statement 5. Legislators showed the strongest disagreement with nearly 91% dissenting.

Statement 6

School districts should design their own plan subject to approval of the SDE.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	44.7%	11.9%	43.4%	4%
Teachers 7-12	38.3	11.9	49.8	4
Administrators	34.9	9.8	55.3	9
Legislators	14.3	11.4	74.3	a
Private Citizens	30.0	20.6	49.4	9
Other Educators	43.4	7.2	49.4	a

Teachers K-6 slightly favored Statement 6 while all other groups showed unfavorable responses. It should be noted that the category "No Opinion" accounted for a substantial number of replies.

Statement 7

The legislature should appropriate special funds to evaluate teachers for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	43.5%	16.6%	39.9%	4%
Teachers 7-12	43.7	15.3	41.0	4
Administrators	69.1	7.2	23.7	8
Legislators	31.4	11.5	57.1	a
Private Citizens	49.4	17.9	32.7	9
Other Educators	56.2	13.8	30.0	a

More respondents favored this question than opposed except for the legislators who responded.

Statement 8

As a part of the evaluation process, teachers in a given area should be evaluated by their peer from other districts who teach the same subjects.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	44.4%	10.1%	45.5%	4%
Teachers 7-12	51.6	10.2	38.2	4
Administrators	62.3	9.2	28.5	8
Legislators	47.1	15.8	37.1	a
Private Citizens	53.9	19.4	26.7	9
Other Educators	54.9	11.0	34.1	a

Teachers K-6 show almost an even split on Statement 8 while all others show a majority favoring outside evaluators. Administrators show a higher level of acceptance than all others. Many comments attached to a negative response expresses the fear of many good teachers being taken from classroom duties to perform this service.

Statement 9

Student achievement should be a factor in evaluating teachers for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	24.4%	9.6%	66.0%	4%
Teachers 7-12	24.6	11.8	63.6	4
Administrators	59.9	6.3	33.8	8
Legislators	72.7	12.1	15.2	a
Private Citizens	78.2	9.4	12.4	8
Other Educators	32.1	9.6	58.3	a

Administrators, legislators, and private citizens show favor for using student achievement as a factor for merit pay. Teachers in the classroom and other educators strongly oppose this concept.

Statement 10

Teachers should be required to apply for merit pay based on criteria established by SDE and/or local districts.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	35.0%	21.7%	43.3%	4%
Teachers 7-12	36.2	18.0	45.8	4
Administrators	57.8	12.2	30.0	8
Legislators	71.4	11.5	17.1	a
Private Citizens	55.2	23.0	21.8	9
Other Educators	45.6	16.7	36.7	a

Legislators who responded showed a higher approval rating requiring educators to apply for merit pay than administrators or private citizens who also approved. Elementary and secondary teachers showed disapproval for the application process.

Statement 11

Teachers 60 years of age or older with 30 years of teaching experience should meet the same criteria as all others for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	67.7%	9.5%	22.8%	4%
Teachers 7-12	66.3	10.8	22.9	4
Administrators	82.5	4.3	13.2	7
Legislators	73.5	5.9	20.6	a
Private Citizens	77.8	8.2	14.0	7
Other Educators	75.3	4.9	19.8	a

All categories felt that age should not be a factor in awarding merit pay.

Statement 12

Prospective teachers are now required to take a competency test and the National Teachers' Exam. All teachers should take an additional test on subject matter to qualify for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	11.9%	7.9%	80.2%	3%
Teachers 7-12	19.8	9.7	70.5	4
Administrators	25.1	6.8	68.1	8
Legislators	54.3	20.0	25.7	a
Private Citizens	66.9	18.9	14.2	8
Other Educators	32.1	9.9	58.0	a

Private citizens and legislators favored teachers taking an additional test while all educators were solidly opposed.

Statement 13

All public employees, appointive and elective, should be evaluated for merit pay.

CATEGORY	AGREE	NO OP	DISAGREE	ERROR
Teachers K-6	64.5%	12.8%	22.7%	4%
Teachers 7-12	64.9	11.3	23.8	4
Administrators	73.4	8.1	18.5	8
Legislators	30.3	19.2	51.5	a
Private Citizens	64.3	16.1	19.6	9
Other Educators	62.7	11.0	25.3	a

Only legislators did not agree that all public employees should be evaluated for merit pay. A substantial number of those who rated the question favorable did so with the condition that if educators were to be evaluated all others should be included.

Statement 14

Try to recall the best public school teacher who taught you—list two of his/her best qualities.

Answers were dichotomized as measureable and nonmeasureable items. A few examples are shown with quote marks omitted.

Creative	Interest in students
Good listener	Knowledge of subject matter*
Trustworthy	Ability to communicate
Firm	Strict disciplinarian*
Fairness	Great attitude
Demanding	High morals

Initiative	Love of children
Understanding	Professional appearance
Enthusiasm	Sense of humor
Courteous	Dependability*
Caring	

It is apparent that those who responded remember characteristics of teachers that are most difficult to measure. More than 68% of the responses were items that specialists in measurement have found difficult or impossible to measure.

* Measurable items

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate little agreement between educators and those legislators who responded. Private citizens tended to lean more toward the direction of the legislators than that of the educators. Obvious statistical tests were not applied where overwhelming evidence (percentages) were persuasive. Classroom teachers are opposed to merit pay. A substantially greater number of those who would most likely be the beneficiaries of merit pay are opposed.

The hypotheses stated earlier are repeated for clarity in this segment. Hol: There will be no significant differences among educators as to perceptions toward merit pay.

Hypothesis 1 was supported in only two statements, (3) merit pay should apply to all professional personnel...and (13) all public employees, appointive and elective, should be evaluated for merit pay. The Chi square statistic was used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of confidence. See Table 15. Statements 1, 2, and 4 through 12 were all significant at less than .005. In most instances differences found between classroom teachers amounted to the degree of disagreement or agreement rather than a preponderance favoring or not favoring. Statement 1 shows classroom teachers indicating 6.3% and 10.1% (K-6 teachers and 7-12 teachers) respectively in favor of statement 1 while 17.0 percent of the administrators favored the statement. All three groups were opposed to the statement.

Statement 2 shows 59.1% of the administrators favoring while 44.3% and 47.9% of the classroom teachers favored the statement.

Statement 3 shows no significant difference.

Statement 4 shows that administrators favored the SDE designing the instrument for evaluating teachers for merit pay to a much higher degree than did the classroom teachers.

Statement 5 shows that a higher percentage of elementary teachers favored this statement than did secondary teachers and administrators.

Statement 6 gives higher approval for all teachers than for administrators even though all three groups showed more opposition than approval.

Statement 7 showed administrators with much higher support than did elementary and secondary teachers. All three groups approved.

Statement 8 showed the highest support for administrators, followed by secondary teachers then by elementary teachers. Most favored outside peers as a part of the evaluation process.

Statement 9 shows a distinct contrast with administrators favoring student achievement as a factor in merit pay while classroom teachers showed a high degree of disagreement.

Statement 10 indicates that administrators would favor teachers being required to apply for merit pay, teachers were opposed.

Statement 11 shows that all three groups of educators felt that teachers 60 years or over should meet the same criteria as all others in order to receive merit pay. Administrators show a substantially higher percentage favoring than the teachers.

Statement 12 indicates that all three groups of educators oppose teachers being required to take an additional exam. More administrators favored this item than did the teachers.

Statement 13 was the second of two that showed no significant difference thereby supporting the null hypothesis. All educators favored all public employees being subjected to evaluation for merit pay.

Based on 11 of the 13 statements resulting in significant differences, it appears that Hypothesis 1 should be rejected. It will be assumed that the differences, as indicated, were large enough to preclude a chance occurrence.

Table 15

Test of Hypothesis one for Statements 1-13

Statement	Chi Square	df	P	_
1	29.82	2	.00	***
2	19.83	2	.00	***
3	3.88	2	.14	
4	23.25	2	.00	***
5	26.25	2	.00	***
6	14.13	2	.00	***
7	40.28	2	.00	***
8	30.62	2	.00	***
9	123.90	2	.00	***
10	33.38	2	.00	***
11	14.79	2	.00	***
12	38.03	2	.00	***
13	4.25	2	.12	

Note *** Significant at < .005

Ho2: There will be no significant differences between educators and legislators/civic club members as to perceptions toward merit pay for educators. See Table 16.

The results, tested by the Chi Square distribution with one degree of freedom, show that there were significant differences on 12 of the 13 statements contained in the Opinionnaire. All tests were made at the .05 level of confidence.

Statement 7 "The legislature should appropriate special funds to evaluate teachers on Merit Pay." When the 35 legislators were parcelled out, the responses for that group were negative toward the issue while all others showed a high degree of favoritism.

Some of the significant differences are due to the degree of acceptance or nonacceptance. For instance, Statement 3 poses "merit pay should apply to all professional personnel (teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.)". All groups favored the statement. The degree of difference brought about the significance level.

Table 16

Test of Hypothesis Two for Statements 1-13

Statement	Chi Square	df	P	
1	517.95	1	.00	***
2	10.48	1	.00	***
3	19.59	1	.00	***
4	81.41	1	.00	***
5	17.11	1	.00	***
6	9.53	1	.00	***
7	.13	1	.72	
8	17.80	1	.00	***
9	219.25	1	.00	***
10	50.50	1	.00	***
11	6.14	1	.01	**
12	327.22	1	.00	***
13	4.99	1	.02	*

* Significant at less than .05

** Significant at .01

*** Significant at less than .005

Ho3: Areas where people live will have no significant difference as to perceptions toward merit pay.

There was a significant difference among teachers who lived in county districts with teachers who live in municipal separate and other districts. The significant differences were found in Statement 4, "the SDE should design the instrument..." with county teachers showing a significantly higher preponderance favoring the Statement. Chi Square equals 21.70; degrees of freedom = 8; and p was less than .01.

Teachers in county units felt more positive toward outside evaluation than did their counterparts in municipal and other districts.

Ho4: Age will not be a factor in the perceptions of merit pay.

This hypothesis was primarily directed toward Statement 11, "Teachers 60 years of age or older with 30 years of service should meet the same criteria as all others for merit pay".

This hypothesis was tested using the appropriate median age (43) estimated by determining the median in a range of 21 to 65 years of age. When the Chi Square statistic was used there was no significant difference in the response of younger and older teachers.

Observations

The issue of merit pay has polarized the positions of the people who are directly responsible for educating the young people of Mississippi with those who are directly responsible for providing public funds. This polarization could easily move within each district creating disillusion, distrust, and further diluting the current weakened status of the public education system now in place. Private citizens tend to lean more in the direction of legislators on the topic of merit pay. If, in fact, educators have a valid position in regard to this controversy, it is abundantly clear that that position has not been clearly presented to the general public. If these polarized positions can be moved, however slightly, toward each other through public forums, media, or by any method, Mississippi schools could overcome the negative impact created by the issue of merit pay.

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APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire

Instructions

OPINIONNAIRE

PLEASE PLACE A CHECK MARK (X) FOR DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS

A. The School District in which I reside is classified as a

1. County Unit.___.; 2. Municipal Separate.___.; or 3. Other.___.

B. My zip code is ._____.

C. My age is below 43._____.; or 43 or above._____.

D. My occupation is

1. Public school elementary teacher (K-6)._____.
2. Public school secondary teacher (7-12)._____.
3. Public school administrator._____.
4. Legislator._____.
5. Private citizen._____. Occupation._____.
6. Other (specify)._____.

PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CODES FOR YOUR RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENTS BELOW:

STRONGLY AGREE (SA) -5; AGREE (A)-4; NO OPINION (N)-3; DISAGREE (D)-2; STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD)-1. CIRCLE ONLY ONE CHOICE. COMMENT AT THE END.

SA	A	N	D	SD		
5	4	3	2	1	1.	The total salary increase for teachers in 1987-88 should be based on merit.
5	4	3	2	1	2.	A percentage of the total teacher pay raise should be made across the board and the rest should go for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	3.	Merit pay should apply to all professional personnel (teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.).
5	4	3	2	1	4.	The State Department of Education (SDE) should design the system for evaluating teachers for merit pay and apply it uniformly statewide.

SA	A	N	D	SD		
5	4	3	2	1	5.	Local districts should be allowed to design their own system for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	6.	School districts should design their own plan subject to the approval of the SDE.
5	4	3	2	1	7.	The legislature should appropriate special funds to evaluate teachers for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	8.	As a part of the evaluation process teachers in a given area should be evaluated by their peers from other districts who teach the same subjects.
5	4	3	2	1	9.	Student achievement should be a factor in evaluating teachers for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	10.	Teachers should be required to apply for merit pay based on criteria established by SDE and/or local districts.
5	4	3	2	1	11.	Teachers 60 years of age or older with 30 years or more of teaching experience should meet the same criteria as all others for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	12.	Prospective teachers are now required to take a competency test and the National Teachers' Exam. All teachers should take an additional test on subject matter to qualify for merit pay.
5	4	3	2	1	13.	All public employees, appointive and elective, should be evaluated for merit pay.
					14.	Try to recall the best public school teacher who taught you—list two of his/her best characteristics.

a. _____.

b. _____.

15. List any comments on a separate page--number the applicable item.

GULF COAST CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH

118 WOODLAND PARK DRIVE

BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI 39531

PURPOSE

This opinionnaire is designed to permit educators, legislators, and other citizens to express opinions regarding attitudes toward merit pay. It also provides an opportunity to suggest the most appropriate way(s) to implement the legislative mandate.

DIRECTIONS

Merit pay is now a part of the law for classroom teachers. Since this appears to be a nondebatable item at this point, please answer each of the questions without regard to whether you favor or do not favor merit pay.

FIRST skim through all of the questions before you make any marks. Answer each question as though it has no relationship to any of the others. The opinionnaire is designed to elicit your own private thoughts so please complete the document without consultation.

AFTER COMPLETION

While this project is not connected with any official committee within the state, the results will be made available to whomever chooses to request the final results. BE ASSURED THAT NO PERSON OR NAME OF A SCHOOL WILL APPEAR IN THE STUDY.

TURN IN YOUR COPY

One person in your organization will be designated to collect and return all copies to this office. Thank you sincerely for your participation.

GULF COAST CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH

118 WOODLAND PARK DRIVE

BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI 39531

TO: SUPERINTENDENTS IN RANDOMLY SELECTED DISTRICTS

SUBJECT: MERIT PAY OPINIONNAIRES

Your school district was randomly selected to participate in this study on merit pay. Opinionnaires have also been sent to a random sample of people in your community. Certain schools in your district have also been randomly selected in order that the entire sample represents grades K or 1-12. Pilot groups have all completed the instrument in less than six minutes.

Would you please permit the schools listed on the enclosed packages to participate? BE ASSURED THAT THE NAMES OF SCHOOLS OR SCHOOL DISTRICTS WILL NOT APPEAR IN PUBLICATION OR BE DIVULGED IN ANY WAY.

Opinionnaires are included for you and for members of your administrative staff. These may be duplicated or you may wish to give these out randomly including principals/assistants in schools that were not selected. Please ask a member of your staff to distribute, collect, and mail the administrative sample. Directions for mailing individual schools are included in each packet.

As soon as the data are in and analyzed, a copy of the results will be mailed to you. If you should desire a copy of the entire study we will be happy to respond to your request.

If for some reason you do not wish to have your district participate in this project, please call me at 374-8348 in order that we may randomly select another district. I do trust that this will not be the case and permit me to thank you in advance for your participation.

B i l l L e e , P r o j e c t D i r e c t o r

118 Woodland Park Drive
Biloxi, Mississippi 39531
April 17, 1986

The Honorable Senator/Representative
Mississippi State Capitol
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Ladies and Gentlemen

The passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982 was a herculean task by both houses of the Legislature. You will recall that one provision of the act provides for a merit pay provision beginning in the 1987-88 school year.

This study is an attempt to gather opinions from a wide variety of Mississippians as they perceive various options. You are included since so many of our laws provide for the development of guidelines by the State Department of Education. This study is not connected with the Committee assigned the task of developing guidelines, however, the results will be available to the Committee, to you, and to whomever may have an interest. Based on the regional meetings held on other facets of the Reform Act, many people did not choose to participate even though every effort was made in the meetings I attended to encourage interaction.

The pilot study indicates that less than six minutes will be necessary for you to complete the Opinionnaire. Would you please complete the enclosed form and return it today or within the week. BE ASSURED THAT THERE WILL BE NO NAMES DISCLOSED OR INDIVIDUAL CITIES OR TOWNS NAMED.

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

BILL LEE, PROJECT DIRECTOR

GULF COAST CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH

118 WOODLAND PARK DRIVE

BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI 39531

TO: THE PERSON VOLUNTEERING TO HELP

SUBJECT: DIRECTIONS

Thank you in advance for assisting us in this project. Please follow the directions explicitly. During your next faculty meeting, hopefully during this week, hand out the opinionnaire to each member of your certified faculty including administrative and other support personnel.

Ask each person to read carefully the directions on the first page. It will take less than six minutes for the entire process. If a person does not wish to participate ask them to write NO across the form and return it to you or you can write NO on the number of forms for people who refused. Ask them to tear off the sheet of directions and return the forms to you for mailing. Please assure each participant that NO PERSON OR NAME OF SCHOOL WILL BE DIVULGED in this report. This may be the only opportunity to express as a group anonymous feelings on this subject. Since your school was picked at random from your school district and your school district picked at random from the State, you can see the importance of having as many respondents as possible.

PLACE THE COMPLETED FORMS IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND PLACE THEM IN THE MAIL TODAY. RESULTS OF THE STUDY WILL BE SENT TO YOUR DISTRICT OFFICE. We will mail a copy to you (our volunteer) if you will let us know. Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely

Bill Lee

APPENDIX B

Responses

APPENDIX B

RAW SCORE RESPONSES TO OPINIONNAIRE

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
Statement 1. The total salary increase for teachers in 1987-88 should be based on merit.						
K-6	18	47	34	307	628	1034
7-12	25	93	47	332	670	1167
Adm	16	25	9	86	105	241
Leg	16	8	0	11	0	35
*Civic	61	47	16	32	16	172
Staff	9	12	2	28	33	84
Total	145	232	108	796	1452	2733
Statement 2. A percentage of the total teacher pay raise should be made across the board and the rest should go for merit pay.						
K-6	136	322	58	210	308	1034
7-12	174	383	91	201	313	1162
Admin	43	97	15	36	46	237
Leg	2	8	6	8	11	35
Civic	48	55	19	26	20	168
Staff	14	33	2	14	19	82
Total	417	898	191	495	717	2718

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
Statement 3. Merit pay should apply to all professional personnel...						
K-6	435	349	49	73	121	1027
7-12	520	338	59	81	181	1179
Adm	84	92	12	15	34	237
Leg	15	13	4	2	1	35
Civic	88	59	13	8	5	173
Staff	36	27	3	5	10	81
Total	1178	878	140	184	352	2732
Statement 4. The State Department of Education (SDE) should design the system for evaluating teachers and apply it uniformly statewide.						
K-6	208	295	87	192	259	1041
7-12	250	321	95	230	279	1175
Adm	82	76	10	33	36	237
Leg	20	12	0	2	1	35
Civic	81	56	13	16	4	170
Staff	21	30	8	9	14	82
Total	662	790	213	482	593	2740
Statement 5. Local school districts should be allowed to design their own system for merit pay.						
K-6	125	246	78	266	307	1022
7-12	109	213	107	285	438	1152
Admn	17	37	11	72	101	238
Leg	1	0	2	10	20	33
Civic	9	22	25	55	56	167
Staff	11	12	9	24	26	82
Total	272	530	232	712	948	2694

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
Statement 6. School districts should design their own plan subject to the approval of the SDE.						
K-6	115	342	122	210	234	1023
7-12	114	318	134	242	320	1128
Adm	18	64	23	60	70	235
Leg	1	4	4	11	15	35
Civic	9	42	35	41	43	170
Staff	16	20	6	22	19	83
Total	273	790	324	586	701	2674
Statement 7. The legislature should appropriate special funds to evaluate teachers for merit pay.						
K-6	144	301	169	160	248	1022
7-12	175	325	175	179	291	1145
Adm	72	91	17	30	26	236
Leg	3	8	4	12	8	35
Civic	31	52	30	31	24	168
Staff	18	27	11	9	15	80
Total	443	804	406	421	612	2686

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Agree	Total
Statement 8. As a part of the evaluation process teachers in a given area should be evaluated by their peers from other districts who teach the same subjects.						
K-6	122	339	105	211	261	1038
7-12	169	426	118	200	241	1154
Adm	41	108	22	42	26	239
Leg	3	13	5	9	4	34
Civic	26	63	32	27	17	165
Staff	19	26	9	12	16	82
Total	380	975	291	501	565	2712
Statement 9. Student achievement should be a factor in evaluating teachers for merit pay.						
K-6	49	203	99	289	392	1032
7-12	46	236	136	303	427	1148
Adm	24	118	15	51	29	237
Leg	7	17	4	4	1	33
Civic	51	82	16	16	5	170
Staff	7	20	8	21	28	84
Total	184	676	278	684	882	2704

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
Statement 10. Teachers should be required to apply for merit pay based on criteria established by SDE and/or local districts.						
K-6	69	290	222	204	240	1025
7-12	77	338	206	228	296	1145
Adm	37	96	28	38	31	230
Leg	5	20	4	5	1	35
Civic	25	66	38	17	19	165
Staff	12	24	14	14	15	79
Total	225	834	512	506	602	2679
Statement 11. Teachers 60 years of age or older with 30 years or more of teaching experience should meet the same criteria as all others for merit pay.						
K-6	280	411	97	97	136	1021
7-12	350	418	125	101	164	1158
Adm	78	115	10	16	15	234
Leg	11	14	2	3	4	34
Civic	53	80	14	18	6	171
Staff	28	33	4	7	7	81
Total	800	1071	252	242	334	2699

CATEGORY	S. Agree	Agree	No Opin	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
Statement 12. Prospective teachers are now required to take a competency test and the National Teachers' Exam. All teachers should take an additional test on subject matter to qualify for merit pay.						
K-6	34	87	81	286	533	1021
7-12	68	158	111	270	535	1142
Adm	16	43	16	72	88	235
Leg	9	10	7	8	1	35
Civic	57	56	32	16	8	169
Staff	9	17	8	19	28	81
Total	193	371	255	671	1193	2683
Statement 13. All public employees, appointive and elective, should be evaluated for merit pay.						
K-6	355	287	128	98	128	996
7-12	404	334	129	101	170	1138
Adm	95	76	19	22	21	233
Leg	5	5	6	11	6	33
Civic	52	56	27	21	12	168
Staff	30	22	10	11	10	83
Total	941	780	319	264	347	2651

APPENDIX C

Comments

COMMENTS

Statement 15 asked participants to comment on a separate page and number the statements to which they were responding. Refer to Appendix A to review the statements. The following comments were made by teachers in grades K through 6:

Item #1: There are indeed poor teachers in our district as well as those who could be judged as "better" than others. "Weeding out" does need to occur. But merit pay will cause hard feelings among colleagues. I can already see it and the program is 2 years down the road. My opinion is merit pay can be implemented WHEN our average pay reaches national average.

Items #3 and #14: Begin with the governor and legislature! If it's good enough for us, it's good enough for them!

Items #4, 5 and 6: The SDE should formulate general guidelines with room for adaptations on the district and local levels because all school systems are not "the same".

Item #9: A poorly worded question! How will you rate student achievement? Would the child have to reach grade level? With some this will never occur. Will they have to show a certain percentage point in growth? You will have teachers who will pad scores, teach tests, etc. The pressure will be astronomical. Some children might not show a noticeable knowledge increase but their self esteem might be increased.

Item #11: With the advancement of age, one could begin to develop a feeling of "I've got it made, only X more years to go!"

Item #12: If a test could be developed to test knowledge of the subject area being taught plus psychology questions relating to behavioral management of your grade level of students this might be o'k but the mumbo jumbo of the NTE has little relationship to classroom situations.

Item #1: I feel that merit pay should be an incentive for teachers who are outstanding in the field of education.

Item #7: I feel this would waste money we don't have. There are other more important needs.

Item #12: I think this would be unfair. Teachers are trained in their profession.

Item #1: Teachers today are under too much pressure as it is with keeping up with AIM, mastery summaries, etc. We don't have the time that we need for Time on Task. I teach every minute that I can and still don't have enough time on task. I take work home with me every night. I think the school system is getting to where the good teachers will leave and seek another profession. This is where our students are falling down. Not enough time on task. We have been through so many tests, and 4 years of college. Isn't that enough? If a teacher is doing her job and the students are mastering the skills on their level, then I think along with other teachers that we should get a raise without all the conflicts and fuss.

Item #1: For merit pay to be effective it must be clearly understood. Sufficient money should be allotted so that every teacher could earn the merit pay increase if all teachers are rated above the minimum standard.

Designs which provide only sufficient funding for a certain percentage of the teachers will not be received as well as those which have the capability of rewarding 100% of teachers who achieve the set criteria.

Item #4: SDE should design the systems -- I cannot imagine one instrument which could adequately cover all teachers -- regular classroom, elementary, secondary, special education, gifted, ch. I, vocational, etc.

Item #8: Peer evaluation from outside the district should be utilized in co-evaluating (with the principal) on subsequent evaluations only for those teachers who "fail" the initial evaluation by the principal. The logistics involved in using peer teachers for all evaluations would be awesome. Who would be teaching while all of these folks are off evaluating?

An alternative would be for the state to fund "X" number of teachers from all areas to function as peer evaluators each year. These positions would rotate -- the teachers being granted a leave of absence by their districts. Mileage, meals, lodging would have to be provided by the state or districts.

Item #9: Student achievement should be used only in terms of five-year averages. Even then it would have to be "weighted" due to many local variables. True random class assignments may occur but not on a regular basis. Every year it is soon obvious that some teachers have drawn "Good Groups" and "Poor Groups".

Item #10: Teachers should have the opportunity to be considered or not considered for the merit pay increase each year. This option should provide an "escape hatch" for those who do not feel up to the pressure/stress involved.

Item #13: I feel that all public employees should be evaluated for merit pay if teachers are to be evaluated.

Item #1: It seems soon to implement this. We all need more information. Costs, who pays, what traits are deserving of merit pay -- should be publicized.

Item #12: Teachers already in the system should not be subjected to "competency testing". It is guaranteed to lower morale and increase frustration. Rather, the merit pay evaluations should enable districts to move teachers out who are consistently "failing" to achieve the minimum standards or those who opt never to apply for consideration if other evaluation means reveal serious short-comings.

Consideration must also be given to how to handle teachers who are awarded the merit pay. It would logically follow that these teachers would be selected year after year.

Obviously, it would be unfair to set a limit on the number of times that an individual teacher could be awarded the merit pay increase. Unless the system is prepared to award merit pay to all the teachers, if all pass, those who do earn the merit increase year after year would do so at the loss of collegiality and fellowship within the local staff. (See comment to Item #1).

Item #1: I would like to see competent, dedicated, concerned teachers get the pay they so richly deserve. However, in all honesty I cannot think of a fair method of evaluation. Any method worth considering would be so costly to our impoverished State of Mississippi, that it would hardly be worthwhile when this money is so desperately needed in other educational areas.

Item #2: While one person may consistently do his best, another can count on a percentage raise for possibly just getting by. This seems unfair!

Items #4, 5, 6, 10: It seems local school districts and State Department of Education should cooperate to develop and implement a uniform system for merit pay. This would be fair, and simple.

Item #7: Since school budgets are dwindling for the basics of education, and since the legislature is passing merit pay, why shouldn't it foot the bill?

School districts do not need to lose any more money! Enough is being taken away from the children with cuts in programs. Funding for merit pay would possibly end in more cuts in what our children are getting!

Item #8: Peers from the same district would be unfair and a mistake.

Peers from outside could be more objective.

Item #9: Some children, due to differing factors, achieve only minimally. This is reality even though we wish for maximum achievement. Why should a teacher who is proficient in knowledge of subject matter and teaching skills be held responsible for those students who do not achieve due to circumstances beyond the teacher's control, such as lack of motivation in the home, emotional problems, limited mental abilities, poor health, frequent moving from one school to another, excessive absences?

If merit is based on student achievement, possibly it should compensate, on a percentage of total students, for the above mentioned factors.

Item #12: Test-taking is one skill. Some are proficient at taking tests while others are not. Teacher Competency in the classroom is another skill. Good, effective teachers may not be good at taking tests. Horrible, ineffective teachers, who are good at taking tests, may end up in the classroom. A written test does not assess teacher competency in the classroom!

Item #2: Every teacher should receive a definite increase in pay yearly, due to experience. Merit pay should be over and above that amount.

Item #2: Until Mississippi teacher pay is comparable to the national average, it should all be across the board.

Item #4: If merit pay evaluation is consistent throughout the state, maybe it will be done more fairly.

Item #8: I feel threatened by this, as I don't see how a teacher could perform at her best, when being evaluated. However, if I'm observed, I would prefer that it be by someone from another district.

Item #9: Student achievement is what teaching is all about. It should be THE factor!

Item #10: If it is already a part of the law, why should we have to apply for it?

Item #11: Give them an option of early retirement.

Item #12: What will this possibly prove that you don't already know???

Item #1: Merit pay could prove too controversial. It may be difficult for administrators to evaluate some personnel fairly.

Item #2: Teacher pay raises should be given annually, but pay raises should not be based on merit pay.

Item #4: Create bonus incentives such as: workshops, classes pertaining to subject matter.

Item #12: All districts should give its own competency test before hiring that person as a part of the employment application.

Item #3: Since merit pay is a part of the law for classroom teachers, it should also be applied to all professional personnel. Quite often principals and especially superintendents are allowed to do things that teachers aren't and never be reprimanded in any way. Merit pay would help to eliminate that problem.

Items #4 and #6: All teachers should be evaluated exactly the same way. If not there is no fair way to say which teachers deserve merit pay. The people evaluating should be trained completely before being asked to evaluate someone when it affects their pay.

Item #9: There is too much burden placed on the teacher already based on student achievement. The student needs to have some responsibility for his learning, and the teacher not expected to carry all the responsibility.

Item #12: Most teachers today have taken the NTE so why should we have to be retested.

Item #3: I am for merit pay. My only concern is that the criteria used to determine who gets merit pay be valid and fair.

Item #9: There are so many factors involved in student achievement besides the teacher's skill that I do not believe this should weigh very much towards merit pay. (Other factors -- home situation, parental concern, lack of motivation in students.)

Item #2: The salaries of Mississippi teachers are already too low. Funds need to be appropriated for all teachers to receive an increase in pay. In the area of merit pay, there should be enough money for all who wish to attain the standards for merit pay to receive the extra pay.

Items #3 and #13: I disagree with merit pay, but since it is law, I think all professional personnel in schools and all public employees should have to live with it. Merit pay, on the surface, sounds good, but is there a way to administer the program fairly? Maybe if some elected officials had their pay determined by merit, they would see the fallacies of the law that was passed.

Item #4: I would want the State Department of Education to be involved in designing and applying merit pay only if the SDE was made of the top - most knowledgeable people - and standards were uniform across the state.

Item #5: The ideal would be for local districts to design their own system - but the problem is the difference in quality of different districts. This could create problems. There should be a high degree of uniformity.

Item #9: If student achievement is a factor, then I want students on grade level who have parents who are interested in their achievement. What can I do in 1 hour if the student runs wild the rest of the time - never does homework - skips school - is on drugs, etc.

Item #2: To begin with, a large percentage should be across the board because we are already so far below other states.

Item #4: Teachers should be able to design the system.

Item #9: Some students do not learn at as fast a rate as others being immature or lack of learning in home. Teachers cannot control all the reasons some students fail to learn. In ability grouping, slower classes will not be able to cover as much material and might not score as high on achievement tests as other students.

Item #2: Raises should go to base pay only.

Item #2: This is more favorable than the raise being total merit.

Item #12: Current teachers have met requirements for degree and are involved in inservice programs. If they have problem areas, these are handled with job targets.

Item #7: Money could be used for necessities. An evaluation system should be developed by the current staffs.

Item #3: In many schools the teachers are only as good as the principals and the superintendents. Therefore, merit pay should apply to all professional personnel.

Item #4: The State Department of Education should not design a system for evaluating teachers because most of the people in the State Department know nothing about teaching or what should be taught. The evaluation instrument should be designed by educators.

Item #13: Elected or appointed public employees should be evaluated for merit pay. Our state legislators in Jackson often do not attend roll call or vote on important issues yet they are paid the same. They certainly should not be able to vote themselves a pay increase. Much tax money is wasted on employees who do nothing to earn their salaries.

Item #3: If we have merit pay, all professional personnel should be included.

Item #7: If there are funds available, please use them for something more beneficial for educating children.

Item #9: If a teacher has a low ability class, how could he/she be evaluated for merit pay fairly by looking at their achievement.

Item #10: Teachers who are doing a good job with teaching won't need to take the extra time to make application for merit pay.

Item #4: A committee headed by SDE but consisting of principals, teachers, and superintendents should design the system. Only superintendents with experience as principals or teachers should be invited to be on the committee. This would, probably, eliminate some elected superintendents. Principals and teachers presently active in Mississippi schools should be represented on the committee.

The system, in my opinion, is fair only if it is applied uniformly statewide.

Item #5: Agreement with this statement would lead to another disaster similar to that of the local AIM objectives.

Can you imagine the discontent that would develop among the various school communities if different districts had their own plan for merit pay? Let's learn from our mistakes.

Item #6: See #5's comments.

Teachers need to be given more incentive to be more prepared, to have more knowledge about their subjects, and to perform in the classroom.

Item #9: There are so many factors to be considered here. How do you ensure that no teacher "teaches" the test? Will individual teachers continue to administer their own tests? Will all districts test all their students or just certain groups of students? Will the same test be used throughout the state or will each local district choose which test to administer? How will scores be compared?

Items #4 5 and 6: The state must work with the local districts and work on achieving uniformity within the state. One district can't base merit pay on performance and another on a test on another on amount of education. Everyone in the school district needs to have input with the local administration to come up with a fair and workable plan and those ideas taken to the state department!

The best plan must incorporate several ways of determining merit -- because so many do not test well and are outstanding teachers. And going to school longer doesn't necessarily make a better teacher! And a passing test score doesn't mean the teacher performs in the classroom.

Item #4: Representatives from the various areas or the State should work with the State Department of Education to design the system for evaluating teachers for merit pay.

Item #7: The legislature does not need to spend more money evaluating teachers. The principal of the school should be capable of doing this with no extra expense to the state.

Item #8: My reason for number eight is basically the same as number seven. If teachers are evaluating other teachers, students are being taught by substitutes. The students do not learn as much. Substitutes are an added expense.

Item #9: It is impossible to determine when it dawns on a child what someone has taught.

Item #12: Teachers have been tested many times to obtain a teacher's license. I can see retesting for merit pay more than I can for rehiring or firing. This seems very unfair. I would not let one test determine the grade for any child I teach. I deserve that same respect.

Often a person can test very high and still not be able to teach the subject matter. Knowing the material and being able to teach are two different items.

Items #4 thru 10: I, as a teacher do not have any problems with merit pay. The only thing that does bother me is the personal aspect. I do not want someone to determine my pay that may or may not like me on a personal basis. Personal and professional are two different things and I want to keep them that way.

Develop a standard form for everyone and have someone that doesn't know me personally to do my evaluation.

Item #7: Where would monies for this come from since even the funds for merit pay are questionable at best? However, if merit pay is begun in our state whoever has to spend time evaluating should and must be paid.

Item #13: If teachers are required to take tests for requirements to job raises (merit pay) then so should everyone else, especially legislators and SDE.

Item #9: Too many other factors enter into student achievement to use this for evaluating teachers (peer influence, home environment and parental influence, lack of interest on part of the student, too many outside interests and activities, etc.). Too many good teachers have taught their "hearts out", and there has been no response or feedback from the students.

Item #13: Why evaluate teachers only? Other public employees have to be held accountable in their respective positions also.

Item #3: If teachers are evaluated for merit pay, so should principals, superintendents, etc., be evaluated for merit pay. Why should teachers be singled out for proving their worth?

Item #4: If merit pay must be implemented, it should be uniform and statewide. Each district would set different goals with some district's standards being very high while another's would be low. It should be the same statewide or not at all.

Item #8: I would hate to know that another teacher's pay would be depending on my evaluation. Even though I would be only one person evaluating her/him, I would not like the stress placed on me in evaluating the persons ability to teach one subject on one day.

Item #9: How will you evaluate students' achievement? From the CAT test or Stanford Achievement? some smart kids do terrible on these tests, while slower kids "guess" and get the correct answer. If you go by the number of pass/fails in a room, won't that teacher get smart and stop failing kids and just pass them on?

All school districts do not have the same scoring scale and all teachers do not grade the same. All these factors would have to be uniform statewide to be fair.

Item #7: It seems ridiculous to expect the Legislature to come up with funds for evaluating teachers when they are "crying" because they can find no money (so they say) for pay raises, kindergarten, textbooks, etc.

Item #8: This sounds good, but what happens to the classroom whose teacher is away for several days evaluating her peers? No substitute, no matter how qualified, can help a class to move forward like the regular teacher.

Item #9: This would be acceptable if there were a way to really measure achievement and determine what part the teacher played in the achievement. Achievement tests scores are not as reliable as some would have us believe.

Item #12: That would be fine if the competency test covered matter that each teacher is expected to know in order to teach her students, but don't test me in Geometry or Calculus when I teach fourth grade subjects.

Also -- after merit pay is given on the basis of such a test one time, why would the test be needed again? We would need a different test or criterion the next year.

Item #9: Student achievement should be one of the many factors in evaluating teachers for merit pay. Special consideration should be given to how this would apply to special education teachers as these students would not make as much progress as other classes.

Item #4: School personnel should be involved in designing the evaluation system along with the SDE.

Item #5: There can be no equality if one system is not used throughout.

Item #9: This would not appear to be a valid method of judgment since students and their abilities are not all equal. A teacher should not be penalized for having a low, slow group, which has made little progress.

Item #8: One should not be evaluated by peers that would only see a teacher at work 2 or 3 times a year. Evaluations should be done by someone in the school system that is familiar with the teachers daily methods of teaching. Even though the building principal may not be an expert in every field it is felt he more than anyone else is more aware of his teachers professional abilities and how they do or do not utilize them.

Item #10: The system should be set up so that if a teacher deserves merit pay she/he would automatically receive it based on the criteria they have met.

Item #13: It seems that if pay is to be based on merit there must be an evaluation.

Item #7: School districts are already short of funds. If they are going to be required to spend time and money on this matter it is not right to short the student's equipment and materials in order to accomplish the task.

Items #9 and #12: Exams can be valuable ways of determining success however I have a few questions:

1. Who would make up the exam?
2. Would the SDE complete the AIM program so the school districts would know where they stood with their AIM plan?
3. Would students and teachers be tested according to the state's requirements in AIM?

Items #3

and #13: My greatest fear in merit pay systems is with the people doing the evaluation. As long as different people evaluate, you are always going to have teachers of similar abilities passing and failing. As of yet, I have not seen or heard of a plan that is fool proof; therefore, some will pass that should fail and some that fail should pass.

Item #3: Who will evaluate the administrators?

Item #7: If the state has money to appropriate for all these "special" committees, why can't more money be given to spend on teaching supplies?

Item #9: What about teachers who have to teach the low ability groups? I don't feel it's fair to evaluate a teacher who has the top group with one who has the bottom group.

Item #13: I would love to be given a chance to evaluate the legislators!!

Item #4: State Department designed but with generous input from active teachers.

Item #9: This may create a real "factory production line" effect as far as "cranking" out successful students. May be unfair to special education teachers.

Item #8: May cause problems with district "competition" among peers (objectivity may not be exercised).

Item #4: How qualified is the SDE to design the system for evaluating teachers for merit pay?

Item #6: If we have to have it, why don't we plan our own?

Item #7: Where will the money come from? Not out of the school's pocket book --it's broke!

Item #8: Sounds ok, but when will we have time to do it? Remember -- we have to have 330 minutes of teaching time. Will we receive credit toward recertification when we do this?

Item #4: Someone closer to the classroom teacher should decide what the program for merit pay should be.

Item #12: If a teacher has to spend all that money for a college education and can pass the tests they give you to be able to get out of college, then I think they should not have to take another test. I think this is especially true for teachers with masters degrees. They had to pass a competency test to get their masters.

Item #1: Ability to teach cannot always be judged on achievement of students (grade wise or standard test).

Item #2: Most principals do not know what teachers are actually doing in their classrooms or what they should be doing. This is especially true in the case of special teachers.

Item #3: Too many principals judge on basis of personality traits they find agreeable or the opinions of favored individuals.

Item #4: Unfortunately merit pay is too subjective.

Item #5: Most testing programs in education are idealistic in their philosophy and do not leave room for a teachers true knowledge of how educational situations should be handled but whether they are capable of guessing what the tester desired answer is.

Item #6: Too many professors of education have no classroom experience other than the college environment which is nothing like secondary or elementary.

Items #5 and #6: If local districts design their own merit pay plans it will be harder for teachers to move from one district to another.

Item #4: The SDE should utilize local districts and personnel in the development of a merit pay plan. they should also be utilized in the implementation of the plan.

Item #9: Provided classes have same (approximately same) abilities. If not, this should be considered.

Item #8: I believe the teachers should be evaluated according to the Performanced-Based Accreditation and Performance Appraisal Program. We have educators who are being trained to evaluate. These educators will be very good at what they do and I would be satisfied with what they say. If all teachers use the Mississippi Teaching competencies which Performanced-Based Accreditation use, we will not have any problems.

This will also eliminate extra people from coming into your classroom who might not be qualified to evaluate you.

Item #9: Possibly, if you judged growth the child made from pre and post test and IQ of the children.

Item #8: I feel it would be very unfair for a person never having taught elementary school to evaluate elementary teachers.

Item #9: This would be totally unfair. We can't give them what God didn't give them.

Item #12: We took the NTE once.

Item #13: I am sure this is necessary, but I question how it can humanly be done fairly.

Item #14: The best teacher I had in public school possessed qualities that would be hard to evaluate on paper.

Item #8: I wouldn't mind merit pay at all <u>if</u> a <u>fair</u> way could be found to evaluate the teachers.

Item #12: If a teacher has been teaching at least ten years I'm not sure an additional test would be necessary. At the end of ten years (or thereabouts) everyone should know if the teacher is a good teacher.

Item #11: I'm 54 years old and have taught for 31 years. I'm not exactly sold on merit pay but I would be insulted if my peers were being evaluated for merit pay and I was not. <u>Of course</u> I should meet the same criteria as others for merit pay.

Item #7: Any special funds should be used to increase teachers salaries.

Item #11: Age and experience should be recognized and rewarded.

Item #9: Student achievement should be only one of the many factors. Special Education students achieve differently than others. There are different groups categorized under Special Education now. We have Gifted, EMR, SLD, TMR, DD, Sp's, each of these achieve totally different. I do not feel a teacher should be evaluated by student achievement without looking at the degree to which the student is capable.

Item #9: I feel it would be unfair to use student achievement as a factor in evaluating teachers for merit pay. I teach low income children who, for the majority, come from single parent homes. To compare the achievement of these children, to the achievement of more advantaged children, would be grossly unfair in deciding who receives merit pay.

Item #9: The problem with using student achievement as a criteria for awarding merit pay is many of us teach in schools where most students are near or below the fiftieth percentile. Will we be using scores compared to other scores from past tests to note gains or will we look at one score to determine who will get merit pay?

Also, when will we all give the same test? My school district has given three different tests for the three years I've been here! How can we compare scores? A lot of decisions must be made before we can use student achievement as a criteria in merit pay awards.

Item #11: Teachers with years of experience should get the merit pay. Degree held (A AA, AAA) and years of experience should be considered #1.

Item #11: I feel that it is unfair to require an older teacher to be emotionally upset by new and extra requirements. We don't need ineffective teachers but I do feel merit pay should be elective for the first 5 years. Being allowed time to adapt and prepare for new requirements is essential.

Item #12: It would be a waste of taxpayers money to prepare a testing system and pay for the analysis. The principal in each school should be able to eliminate poor teachers.

Item #9: Where students are ability grouped, many factors affect growth academically. Also, I do not believe it is fair to students or teachers to base student achievement on one week of tests.

Item #13: All public officials and employees should have to be evaluated for merit pay. If this was done there would be a lot of pay cuts for everyone. Teachers have become the scapegoat for the financial problems in Mississippi. The financial problems did not originate with the pay raise for teachers but in the government.

Item #14: The teacher I remember best was one that had time to talk to her students. She was enthusiastic about her job. She was not burdened with reports, AIM, questionnaires and other paperwork of this type. She had time to teach and not worry about evaluations and merit pay. She was respected by her students and parents. This teacher taught 20 years ago. She would never have made it today. The workload we carry would have broken her spirit. This has happened to the current teachers in Mississippi. There is a danger that we will not

attract young people into the teaching profession. If I had to do it over again, I would never have been a teacher. I will not encourage anyone to become a teacher. There are a lot better and more rewarding jobs than teachers.

Items #5 and #11: I do not believe we should have merit pay. However, if it should come to pass, everyone regardless of who should be evaluated.

I don't think merit pay should be a contributing factor as a teacher only means of a pay raise. With the trials and tribulations we encounter daily from all facets of society, we should be given a pay raise every two years as a "Thank you Educator", bonus.

All other states have failed to implement a successful workable merit pay plan, why do you think Mississippi's plan will be any different?

Careful consideration should be given to the implementation of this plan or even its deimplementation. Merit pay is time consuming, money consuming and paper consuming. This thought should be given a second consideration because it is designed to set Mississippi Educators back ten years plus the ten years we are already behind equal equals twenty years.

Merit pay should not only apply to teachers who are overworked, underpaid, burned out, etc., just to name a few, but to all professions. Namely:

1. Legislators
2. Superintendents

3. Principals
4. Governors
5. Mayors
6. Supervisors
7. Doctors (false certificates)

Why has so much pressure been geared toward teachers? We are trying to help the little ones (students) in every aspect which is feasible.

Why are the legislators making all the demands for us (teachers) and they have not been in the classroom(s) and haven't provided the necessary materials for a quality education in Mississippi.

Yes, feedback is geared toward the merit pay, but what good will my opinion make, when this is a law merit pay 1986-87.

Yes, too late for this opinionnaire. And you ask why. Are our children so far behind in Education?

I do not support the merit pay system. I believe that before this system can be instituted in this state, teachers base pay and fringe benefits must be competitive with those of other professions requiring similar preparation and training.

I worked hard for my degree. Any merit pay would or should reflect that my supervisor thinks I do a good job and that most of my students show improvements in the area I teach.

I totally agree with "weeding out" those who should not be teaching but I don't feel that merit pay is the way to do it.

Merit pay cannot be implemented in a "fair" way. Until a program is designed that could be totally fair, it needs to be postponed. It will take much time to draw up a fair merit pay program. (Not a year or two!)

Merit pay may possibly get poor teachers out of the classroom but it will also add such great pressure to the others that even the good teachers could "fail" because of the unnecessary added pressure. There is already too much work, other than teaching the students, that has been piled onto teachers. None of us can handle much more. Before long, who will be left to teach? Certainly not the better teachers. We're going somewhere else to work!

I see no legitimate and impartial criteria for determining merit pay. Why try what other states (California and Florida) have found not to be adequate, but rather in many cases caused additional problems, including financing and personnel morale, with law suits.

Item #4: If there must be merit pay, then the system for evaluating teachers should be designed by the State Department of Education with local districts (including students and community) input and considerations, and applied uniformly statewide.

Teachers spend years educating themselves to teach, and it is expensive to get an education. Mississippi, pay your teachers what other teachers are being paid. After this occurs, we can consider merit pay.

As a person and educator, I will not be content being last in any situation.

Stop playing politics with educators.

Although merit pay is a commendable idea, I do not think that Mississippi is quite ready for it. Our administrators have enough to do right now without the added burden of merit pay. They need several years to practice and implement this new evaluation process before they begin any other projects. Let's not try to do too much too soon!

I definitely feel that something needs to be done about incompetent teachers. However, I do not feel that competition (description of what merit pay would create) is the answer. The working atmosphere would be very competitive and the morale of the teaching profession will be affected.

I am totally against merit pay until our base pay is average.

Item #1: I believe that the state of MS should take a long, hard look at other states who have tried merit pay and have not continued the practice. Wouldn't you like to know why?

Item #2: I believe that the teaching profession is a truly marvelous profession and like all professions, it has its drawbacks. One of those drawbacks is the widespread disease of professional jealousy! I strongly believe that merit pay very simply promotes this disease.

Item #3: MS should be striving to keep its good teachers. Instead, the paperwork and constant bombardment of new regulations is having the opposite effect. Teachers need time to teach and to prepare to teach. We don't need more problematic paper work. Please keep us in the classroom teaching, not giving busy work while we do our paperwork.

Item #4: I agree that the system should be applied uniformly statewide, but the SDE should not design it.

Items #8 and #9: Performance should be a major part of evaluation for merit pay. Having the knowledge of subject matter is important but having the ability to teach it so that students easily understand it is a different matter. Many observations of performances would decide that.

Item #3: Merit pay (if used) should apply to all.

Before one can decide about these things, one should know the criteria for merit pay.

Item #1: I feel that in 1987-88 a percentage of the total teacher pay raise should be made across the board and the rest should go for merit pay. After that year salary increases should be based solely on merit. I feel this gives people a clear understanding of what the merit pay will be based on and a better chance to meet those requirements.

Merit pay needs to be looked at closely before any conclusions are made. I feel strongly that merit pay is needed. It can be a means of incentive for teachers if handled correctly, while there are some major problems that can arise if mishandled.

Each district should handle their own system for merit pay. This will encourage each district to seriously design an effective system in order to compete for quality teachers. It will also retain control of the schools locally.

Merit pay should not be based on student achievement. There are too many factors which enter into student achievement which are beyond teacher control. Intelligence, home life, past experiences, physical conditions, school conditions, student attitudes are just a few of these factors which must be looked at.

Item #1: Teacher salaries should be raised to the level of the contiguous states before we think about merit pay.

Item #4: Teachers should have input on the system for evaluating teachers.

Item #5: The system should be uniform for the whole state.

Item #9: Who will take into consideration those students who are not motivated? And those with no internal discipline? And those with unconcerned parents?

Item #10: Apply for? What does this mean?

Item #13: Yes, how can these people who make such important decisions about my profession get away with being less competent than I? Laurel City Schools has done an excellent job coordinating AIM. Especially encouraging is its promise of continued usability. To me as a teacher, many of its components I have observed are points for considerations for general merit.

Item #4: The system must be uniform . The system must have teachers in the formulation of the plan.

Item #13: The legislators, governor, etc., should all be subject to merit pay.

Item #12: If teachers have to take a test on subject matter so should our other officials -- especially in Jackson.

From what I've heard about receiving merit pay I can't understand how EMR/SLD teachers could be graded as regular class teachers. After all, the kids we work with are border-line TMR or EMR or have more of a problem in one area than another. They are not regular "normal" children and neither are we teachers of "normal" children. What they may seem to know today they may show no knowledge of tomorrow! Therefore, I see no way I can receive any merit pay in my field according to what I've heard is proposed!

Merit pay is not a bad idea. However, I feel that it should be for those who go beyond the routine duties of teaching. A teacher who does his/her job deserves a decent salary! Mississippi has a long way to go before worrying about merit pay. Base salaries should at least be competitive with bordering states. In my opinion, we are not receiving competitive salaries yet.

Item #7: How ridiculous it would be to appropriate funds for evaluation when we don't have adequate teachers salaries to begin with.

Items #4

5 and 6: Every effort needs to be made to keep personalities out of the evaluation process. The evaluation instrument needs to be constructed in such a way as to be as objective as possible.

Item #8: People in your subject area should definitely be included with the group that is to evaluate you.

Item #12: I believe the test should remain within your subject area.

Item #4: The system should be designed by a group representing classroom teachers as well as administrators. They should be chosen by their peers as representatives and at least half the members should be classroom teachers.

Item #7: This would depend on what cost would incur.

Item #9: Only if all teachers were assigned groups having the same ability and achievement levels -- impossible to be a guaranteed arrangement.

Item #11: If a teacher has given meritorious service for 30 years it could safely be assumed that service will continue. The teacher could be spared further examination. If the service has been without merit the teacher should have been encouraged to quit early in his career and to seek training for another.

Item #13: They should be tested and especially in communications skills.

Items #4

5 and 6: I feel strongly that teachers should have input in devising the evaluation system. A statewide instrument and procedure should be developed from all available suggestions, with classroom

teachers as primary sources for ideas on evaluating teachers. (Principals should give suggestions for evaluating principals, etc.).

Item #9: It depends on how student achievement is used as a factor. Testing at first of year and at end could reveal the amount of progress of each student. Student ability must be considered as well as progress. I think using student achievement as a factor is dangerous unless handled very carefully.

Items #4 5 and 6: There should be input from teachers and administrators at the local level on a merit pay system. The system should be a combination -- compromise of local ideas and SDE ideas.

Item #7: The legislature should have to find ways to appropriate this money; it should not come from the districts.

Item #8: Why add this additional expense to what will be an expensive project anyway?

Item #9: Many, many students do not care about school at all. Why blame the teachers for their lack of achievement on these grounds?

Item #13: Including legislators!

Item #1: No part of teachers' salaries should be based on merit pay for the obvious reason -- some part of the evaluation must be subjective, which totally invalidates the plan. Some persons can be objective -- and will be, but others cannot be objective in evaluation -- and will not be.

Item #3: If merit pay applies to one - it should apply to all.

Item #5: A qualified cross-section of educators in the district should work on plan.

Item #9: How do you evaluate student achievement of an educable mentally retarded and then pay the teacher? How do you evaluate performance of poorly motivated kids who don't care if they pass or fail but come to school because someone makes them?

This opinionnaire is ridiculous:

1. What type of merit pay are we talking about?

   career ladder

   peer observation

   etc.

2. Are the legislators also in agreement that their pay increases should be determined by merit?

Item #9: This could be unfair when evaluating a special education or remedial subject teacher.

I feel "Merit Pay" is very much needed in all aspects of teaching. It is imperative that self-esteem and self-respect be brought back into education. I feel that "Merit Pay" is only a beginning in what is needed to upgrade the educational performance of all.

The state of "Texas" began using merit pay - career ladder last year. It can be done if implemented in the right perspective.

Educators, many I feel, are terrified of this new procedure. I feel that if dealt with correctly, many will realize that this type of recognition is a long time overdue. Many will complain but this is America.

I would be willing to help with implementing merit pay/career ladder.

This method of obtaining raises is in my opinion extremely unfair. It is subject to the bias's and prejudices of local administrators and principals through their pressures which may or may not come to bear on certain teachers who do not fit in a snug little group!

This has been tried in other states without success and I do not personally feel it will do what it was intended to do once instituted.

There are enough people with good intentions now, without even a more cumbersome political machine entering our educational system.

Item #4: Input from teachers should be considered in the design -- classroom teachers -- not just supervisors, counselors, and other administrators.

Item #13: I think there is as much justification for merit pay for other public employees as there is for teachers. However, just as merit pay for teachers will create unnecessary bureaucracy and expense, so would merit pay for others. I'd love to see the legislature "graded" for pay but in the end, as usual, we'd all pay for it as taxpayers.

Item #4: Merit pay lends itself to teachers' having to conform to another person's idea of a good teacher. One principal might over-emphasize discipline while another might over-emphasize creativity. We need an instrument which allows for impartial judgment based on all aspects.

Item #8: This might help with fairness. Within a school system, personalities must come to bear on human decisions.

Item #13: All public employees, appointive and elective, should be evaluated for merit pay if teachers are.

Item #1: Merit pay should not be instituted until the average teacher salary in Mississippi is brought up to the southeastern average!

Item #2: See #1 above.

Item #3: If instituted, should apply to all certified personnel within school district.

Item #5: Absolutely not. Talk about political favoritism!

Item #6: See #5 above.

Item #7: Yes! They mandated the plan and they should fund it!

Item #9: No!! How do you measure student achievement when you teach kids in special education classes, LD classes, TMR classes as compared to teaching kids in AP computer Science, English, Calculus, etc!

Item #10: How in the hell do you "apply" for a raise! Fill out an application? Send me two!!!

Item #12: How can you test classroom effectiveness with a test on subject matter! Einstein was brilliant but could he communicate with a 10th grader!

Item #13: If public school teachers are to be evaluated for merit pay or for contractual purposes, every public employee should undergo the same process.

Item #5: Some districts would be more lenient than others.

Item #7: The legislature has proven themselves to be good at attempting to pass on to local districts the financial burden of new programs and mandates. Merit pay is their little brainstorm so let them find ways to pay for the implementation.

Item #9: The special education teacher (EMR, TMR) will not show as much achievement as the regular classroom teacher. There should be different evaluation processes for the different type programs as mentioned above.

Item 10: I think it is ridiculous to mandate this thing and then have the teacher or whomever to apply for it.

Item #12: If teachers have to take tests for merit pay, every public employee should have to do the same.

Item #12: Taking a competency test does not frighten me. I do not mind proving myself worthy of teaching. If there is a weak or incompetent teacher, I do not believe they should be allowed to remain in education. Although, just because someone has a low NTE score or does not do well on a competency exam does not necessarily mean that they cannot teach the subject matter to their students. On the other hand, a high NTE score and excellent results on a competency exam does not guarantee the best teacher. Even though they may know the subject matter, they may not possess the ability to communicate it to the students. If the State Department of Education could come up with a fool-proof system to effectively evaluate the teachers performance and ability, I would support it.

Item #3: Definitely -- But I do not like the idea of merit pay, because different evaluators will be impressed with different things. It will be too easy for personal opinions to influence decisions. Some teachers can put on a good show, but not get the job done. How long would the evaluator stay? Long enough for the <u>real</u> teacher, administrator, etc. to be seen and evaluated?

Item #5: It should be definitely designed by someone else...A committee, maybe...Plans should be uniform.

Item #8: Maybe the state should be divided up into districts and have fewer evaluators. Fewer evaluators would result in evaluations made by the same standards, opinions, etc.

Item #9: Some students will not try and are harder to motivate. Will the inequalities between districts resulting mainly from financial resources and environments influence achievement?

Item #13: Yes, legislators, clerks -- anyone who is paid with public funds. If its fair for one group, then it should be fair for all.

It's not being evaluated that worries me. It is in the difference in standards by which the evaluation is done. Even a check-list would be answered based on the evaluators opinion.

Item #5: The local district should design its own system only for the merit pay that comes from the local district.

Item #9: Student achievement is not always proportional to the time and effort of the teacher. Many times I have worked hardest in classes that showed little achievement.

Item #9: When I was in the 9th grade I failed Ancient History which was required at my school. The superintendent taught it at that time. My Algebra I teacher wasn't any better teacher than the Ancient History teacher. I was not interested in Ancient History but was in Algebra I. He could not "make me" learn Ancient History. I was interested and wanted to learn Algebra. You cannot teach every student! It would be great, but that's dreaming! They have to have a desire to learn to begin with. (That's like leading a horse to water but making them drink is something else.)

Item #1: Against merit pay raises for teachers!!! The quality of good teachers will decrease. We have enough work if we utilize our class periods for instruction and learning time with our students. Paper work and records required to be completed by teachers in addition to the lesson material preparation. Merit pay increases would be an additional burden on teachers.

Item #9: I feel that student achievement is important, but it sometimes does not become apparent for several years. Achievement measured by a test is many times not the most important achievement of a student or of his teacher.

Item #13: Elected officials are evaluated for merit pay and for no pay each time they come up for reelection. This is a much stronger evaluation instrument than any that a department or committee could come up with.

Item #5: Districts <u>should</u> design their own programs given that merit pay is a <u>reality</u> -- it is difficult to answer and rate this question and others. One must assume that the merit system is a necessary evil and then rate these points according to that.

Item #10: It would be nice for merit pay to be in addition <u>and</u> to be something one could chose or refuse to participate in.

Item #8: This would be the <u>only truly fair</u> way to evaluate work.

Item #6: As long as this plan does not add additional paperwork -- a <u>good</u> teacher already has enough paperwork to deal with with class papers, AIM, and staff development.

Item #7: Taxpayers' money should not be used to evaluate teachers who already have degrees and experience. The funds could be better utilized for other education needs.

Item #9: Most elementary schools have ability grouping. Students may not be assigned to teachers objectively.

Item #12: Teachers with advanced degrees have already taken the National Teachers' Exam or the Graduate Record Exam as a requirement for those degrees. The National Teachers' Exam covers most teaching areas. It does not seem logical to have those teachers who have taken the test in their subject area to take it again.

Item #7: Yes, money should be appropriated to pay teachers and/or administrators who give their time in preparing a plan.

Item #8: Imagine what this would cost!

Item #11: How ridiculous!!

Item #13: Imagine the groft and corruption this would generate!

*Because there aren't going to be any skilled and qualified young teachers staying in Mississippi--only the bottom of the barrel teachers and those who can see retirement in sight!

I strongly disagree with merit pay. Having taught under a merit system from which I received the highest pay, I found the system to be unsatisfactory causing dissention and resentment among the faculty. Your best teaching comes with a happy, cooperative working relationship between teachers and administrators. The merit pay destroys this.

Item #9: How in the world can you make this a factor considering the wide range of, intellectual abilities taught and the home backgrounds? Most children do the best they can or are encouraged to do by the families they come from.

A teacher can be most outstanding, organized, bubbley, etc., and still not be able to get slow learners to achieve on a higher level.

Shall we work in a penality for parents, when their children do not turn homework or make progress, because the parents have not supervised and seen to it that children progress as we have structured the course of study? Perhaps we should require parents to take an examination to see if they are capable of meeting standards for parenting and tutoring. Ah, "Big Brother" you are here and we are yours. If you need constructive suggestions I'll be glad to help.

Merit pay is now a part of the law.

I think that this is a law that should be repealed. Teachers should work together to provide the best total education for the students. Merit pay will cause many problems in faculty morale. Schools today, as in the past, have too many political ties to be able to fairly initiate judgements on their staff. I believe that students in teacher education programs should be screened (tested) on their subject matter and then when on the job evaluate what they teach and how they teach. Then if problems exist in the "hat and how" the teacher should be given the opportunity and support to correct those problems.

If no effort is made or if the teacher can't correct the problems then the teacher should be dismissed. We do need evaluations for what is taught, how it is taught and how well the students retain what is taught but, the politics should be removed as much as possible and the main efforts put on how to improve what the student is exposed to and what they retain.

I feel that one test could be designed to determine if a teacher is qualified to enter teaching. After that point inservice should determine certification. One test or evaluation method would be sufficient to determine merit pay.

Items 5, 6 and 7: One of the biggest problems in this state is the lack of uniformity. Most systems do excellent jobs in all phases of their programs, but some just fall through the cracks.

Item #9: I strongly believe that most students can be and are positively affected by their teachers, but you must face facts with some students who will not learns, even from an exceptional teacher.

Item #12: With all of the discussion of the inadequacy of the student standardized tests (such as ACT), how can we expect a teacher's standardized test to be any different.

I am vehemently opposed to merit pay and all of the ramifications it predisposes. I am a competent qualified educator and I resent insinuations that I am otherwise. When the governor, lt. governor, legislature, doctors, lawyers are evaluated on the basis of merit then as a teacher I can be ready for such, until then absolutely unequivocall, NO. Laws as such can be repealed. Mistakes are sometimes made in the passage of a law and there are avenues open to correct such mistakes.

Item #6: There should be some uniformity throughout the state of an evaluation plan.

Item #8: Teachers do not need to miss their own classes very often for any reason. Those who are honest and good evaluators may be called on very frequently to do an evaluation. Can you prevent this? Does this lead to former classroom teachers becoming professional evaluators?

Item #9: Student achievement can be a valid factor five years after the student has ceased to attend school. Achievement and standardized tests in themselves do not often indicate the student's achievement in one year unless some comparison is done with the year before.

Item #11: Why should any group be exempt? Age and/or experience should not qualify or disqualify any one for merit pay.

Item #12: Once a teacher has made an acceptable score in his field, why should he take another? Certainly, as long as a teacher works in his area, his knowledge of its content should not diminish.

Item #7: Money spent for evaluating teachers could be spent on teachers so they won't leave the profession in order to survive.

Item #9: For teachers teaching low or remedial classes, this process would be unfair--the higher the classes; the higher the student achievement will be.

Item #10: This question was not clear to me. What was meant by "apply"?

Item #12: The test should be not only on their subject matter but also at their grade level.

General Comments: There are too many unanswered question on merit pay. We've lost our goal of teaching--the students!

As teachers are asked (required) to do more and more, leaving them less time for their students--the students do less and less. Students expect teachers to hand them too much.

Who's to JUDGE me as a teacher? A teacher is born not made! All the knowledge in the world won't produce a good teacher--neither will a merit pay plan!

Item #3: If merit pay is to be applied to teachers, all other professional personnel should be subject to a similar evaluation and adjustment of salary.

Item #7: If merit pay is mandated from a state level, the state should provide funds for evaluations.

Item #9: There are too many variables that strongly influence a given student's achievement over which teachers have no control. Also, in some schools were ranking scores, teachers who taught primarily "low" classes could not be fairly compared to other teachers.

Item #12: After teaching a limited area of subject matter for an extended period, one forgets (possibly) related material of amore complex nature. For example, an elementary school language arts teacher may have forgotten exact meanings of literary terminology simply because he/she has not dealt with such terms for a while. Any testing on subject matter should be limited to grade level taught.

Item #16: Teachers deserve better pay and insurance benefits especially hospitalization. A teacher may make a decent salary but the take home pay is poor. About $2,000 a year is spend for hospitalization alone.

Item #17: Make the teacher education fields more demanding and the pay higher and better qualified educators will be the result.

Item #18: Take a page from the education field in Texas and require competency tests.

Item #3: Should apply to all from SD to teachers, if used at all.

Items #5 and #8: Teachers within a district are better able to design their own merit system.

Item #12: A person wishes to teach, because of the love of teaching, (because the payt is not enticing) spends four long years of studying and passing tests but cannot teach if one test (competency test) is not passed? How may good teachers are going to be turned away?

Merit pay is absurb, who is able to determine whether one teacher should be paid more than another for the same job? How will personal feelings be eliminated? What specific criteria can be used to evaluate teachers?

Item #7: Legislature has not proved to be a trustworthy establishment for the appropriating of funds. Where would the money come from?

Item #9: Some students simply refuse to learn regardless of how much pressure is exerted upon them. No one should be made to suffer simply because someone else is impossible to motivate. Given this theory I firmly believe that education will take a tremendous step backward. Many teachers would lower their academic standards rather than requiring that students set high goals for themselves. We would actually be teaching students that someone will pull their "fat" out of the fire. (At the high school level—when do you teach a child to be a responsible adult?)

Item #12: In the state of MS--one must pass the NTE. If this does not test basic competencies nothing else does either.

Item #13: If we subjected teachers to evaluation in order to raise their pay, let's be fair and subject all public employees to same. Fair is fair.

Item #2: 75% - 25% merit or less.

Item #4: SDE <with local input> design system!

Apply uniformly statewide!

Item #1: Teacher pay should be brought up to an acceptable level before any type of merit pay is attempted. Merit pay before this would not be merit pay but rather catch-up pay.

Item #5: Local districts should be allowed to design their own system for merit pay for local monies only. State merit pay should be determined by state officials. Local merit pay by local officials.

Item #9: Not all teachers teach the same level kids--how can we base merit pay on student achievement. We can only teach--not learn for the student.

Item #10: Hopefully all teachers will be considered because they deserve merit pay rather than because the request merit pay.

Item #11: All teachers should be treated with the same regard. Does being old or experienced make you better or worse as far as teaching is concerned?

Item #15: Merit pay should be merit pay. Hopefully "politics" will not be the major factor in who receives merit pay. One's abilities, responsibilities, how they do their job, dedication, professionalism, etc., should be considered. The last thing we need is for merit pay to be administered by the "good ole boy" method. If teachers deserve merit pay they should receive merit pay. If teachers do not deserve merit pay they should not receive merit pay. Merit pay if carried out correctly could be a boost to education in Mississippi. If done incorrectly it could cause major problems. Be careful in your important position concerning merit pay, your decision could effect Mississippi Education for future generations. Good luck!

Item #1: Merit pay, if implemented should include, as a component, evaluation by educators outside of the same school system.

Item #2: In the county, in particular, nepotism and favoritism may be a detrimental, and unfair consideration when evaluation is done by a school's own administrator.

Item #13: I believe that if teachers are to be given a raise based on merit pay, that all elected officials should also be evaluated. The legislators hold part-time jobs that are paid for by taxpayers. They have to answer to no one when they want a raise they just vote it in. They should have to be evaluated. Teachers work much harder and have longer hours than many legislators. I feel that it's very unfair to evaluate just one group of professionals without evaluating all the people who are paid by the state.

Item #1: I feel very strongly that our salaries should be brought up to par - then think about merit pay. More consideration should be given to hiring competent etachers and those who prove to be incompetent should be released.

Item #3: Merit pay should be applied first and foremost to our leaders. I'm not sure that poor leadership on the administrative level isn't the biggest part of our problem.

Item #11: All teachers, regardless of age, experience, race, position and political clout should meet the same criteria.

Item #12: If the State Department of Education and/or Legislature decide that teachers must take an additional test on subject matter to qualify for merit pay (or to maintain employment in the system) I feel that similar tests should be given to all state employees in their respective areas to determine if they are competent to fulfill their responsibilities. All includes Senators, representatives, law enforcement officers, prison guards, teachers, administrators, etc.

Item #1: Merit pay should be considered after base pay, at least, reaches the Southeastern average.

Item #2: Because it is already law, I agree a very small percentage of the pay raise should be used for merit until the base pay is where it should be.

Item #7: The legislature should provide appropriate funds for education, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education determine how it is spent.

Item #8: Research indicates a high correlation between teacher attendance and student achievement, time on task, and quality of instruction, etc. If teachers are running around evaluating then what they are really about suffers. As an administrator I know how much stress is involved in evaluating others. Teachers don't need this stress added to that they already have.

Item #9: How does a test determine exactly what part of learning that particular teacher contributes to achievement? Until we have one that will I have to disagree.

Item #12: Passing a test does not guarantee competency in the instruction of students. Institutions issuing degrees and certification to illiterate and incompetent teachers should be held accountable. You would not necessarily be giving merit pay to teachers who did the best job of instruction, only those who could best pass a test.

Item #13: Yes, if teachers, as public employees, are so should other public employees.

Item #5: If a local district is allowed to design their own system for merit pay, every teacher interested in merit pay should be given an opportunity to base an input into the design.

Item #11: Teachers within 5-6 years of retirement with 30 years of teaching experience should not have to meet the same criteria as younger teachers; if so, these teachers should be given an opportunity to have input from the ground level.

Item #9: Unless class make-up and type of program/subject is considered student achievement cannot and should not be used on a one year basis.

Item #9: Student achievement should be a factor in evaluating teachers for merit pay only is varying abilities of students are taken into account.

Merit pay standards should be set so that it will be available to all teachers who qualify -- not a limited number. Limiting the number of teachers able to receive merit pay will cause serious morale problems.

I believe that some morale and legal problems are inherent in the merit pay concept. The peer evaluator concept must be retained; otherwise, the building principal is going to have serious problems from those teachers who do not receive merit pay. The standards must be set to be as objective as humanly possible.

The merit system was not explained in full. If one person must be tested, all should be tested. Benefits to school employees should include all of them, bus drivers, teacher aides, etc.

I don't feel that Mississippi educators are ready for a merit pay system. To me, this is another instrument to eliminate good teachers. However, teachers should be encouraged to keep abreast of new materials and changes relating to their field, attend work shops, etc., and evaluated by their immediate supervisor and peers. If this merit pay is implemented as is, Mississippi will have a shortage of teachers. If merit pay can be implemented and no humanistic elements involved—it might just work, if not, Lord help us all.

Item #4: This system can be devised as a state level with education personnel within the State and in states with effective merit pay standards as an advisory committee.

Item #9: This seems like a straightforward situation exists in the classroom with the teacher giving information and students learning it, but good students will always absorb the material. Of course, they'll absorb more material from a competent teacher.

Item #13: Some of our public officials definitely need a competency exam.

Item #15: Merit pay is not a good criteria to appoint teachers. The person or persons who pick or point a teacher for merit pay could make a difference, it could involve friendship, cooperation likes and dislikes. Therefore, the best teacher(s) would be omitted most of the time.

Items #5:

and #6: When it comes to local supplements only.

I fully understand that a "successful" merit plan has yet to be implemented in any state that has tried. However, I'm convinced that there has to be some method in rewarding our outstanding teachers in Mississippi and I am also confident that our SDE will develop a workable method of achieving this goal.

Item #8: Would cost too much.

Item #9: Too many good teachers teaching disadvantaged students who, usually show only slight movement in GE gains or even NCE gain.

Item #12: As stated, teachers have already taken and passed NTE. Maybe passing scores need to be raised.

Item #2: Approximately 26 million dollars will go for "Merit Pay" increases to these teachers who qualify ($1,000 for 26,000 teachers). If only half qualify, then they should get $2,000 each. Those that don't qualify, will have to depend on local supplements for their raises in the school year 1987-88.

Items #1

2 and 3: Within our state the purpose of merit pay is not clear.

(a) To make public education more effective?

One administration (Governor Winter's) during the last 30 years has attached economic and political value to public education.

(b) To maintain the status quo?

Recent legislative and administrative actions (consolidation, delay, funding, salaries, etc) strip legislation of topics directed towards better public education in the future.

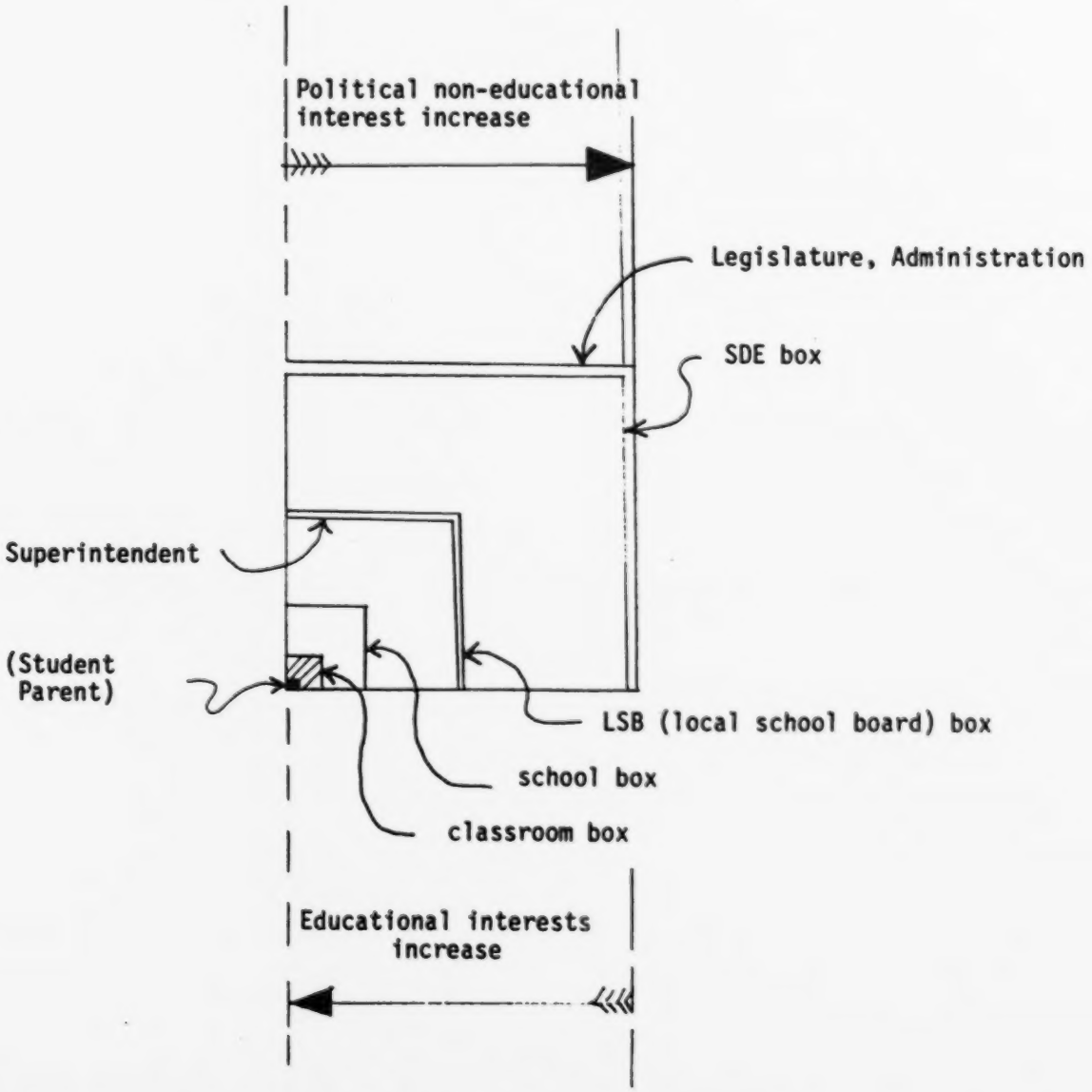
or (c) To impair public education relative to the private/parochial systems?

Recent actions of many school boards, of the SDE, and of the State Legislature have been non-supportive (teacher-salary confrontation and outcome is one of many examples) and discouraging for professional educators in the public school system.

The survey will be highly biased by sense of purpose (a, b, c, above) which should also be queried. This response assumes the purpose is to make public education more effective somewhat tempered because of the high profile of the other likely uses in our State.

Item #3: The system is more easily compared to boxes within boxes (see Figure 1) than organizational charts and graphs. When the big box (SDE) shakes, everything inside is disturbed; when the small box (classroom) shakes, there is very little effect on the bigger boxes.

To be effective an up-front, non-political, public and published review of the SDE actions (including goals, accomplishments, and plans) must complement "merit" of smaller boxes in the system.



Items #3

4,5,&6:

Level	Merit/Review	Design
*SDE	Published Review of Actions, etc.	SDE + Legislative assessment
**LSB	Published Review of Actions, etc.	SDE
Superintendent	Merit	LSB + SDE approval
Principal	Merit (Superintendent + LSB)	+ SDE approval
Teacher, etc.	Merit (Principal + Superintendent + LSB)	+ SDE approval

*SDE = State Department of Education

**LSB = Local School Board

The reviews by the SDE and LSB, hopefully will show good faith towards the professional staff and contain elements tending to eliminate acrimony, unfairness, etc that will occur in the merit pay system. Note that a listing of known existing demographic, economic, and scholastic facts would provide a crude but not unreasonable district-by-district and state-average description of the school systems.

Items 8

9, 10,

11, 12: The system should be required to provide (and the teachers attend) materials or programs relating to classroom management, communication, professionalism, etc., rather than subject material. Knowledge of subject material must always be present this factor is the responsibility of superintendent and principal through hiring, placement, and other management practices-improvement (merit?) in these areas may be warranted.

Item #14: The complete educational system staff (SDE through classroom teacher) should be encouraged and receive credit for attending inexpensive programs, such as Toastmasters, designed to enhance communications skills. Enough flexibility must be provided so that teachers, who are already overburdened with non-instructional administrative matters, are able to direct their primary (first and foremost by far) effort towards instruction. Some existing burdens could and probably should be removed.

Item #1: Mandate that all school teachers are employees of county or municipal system and not statewide. In other words, stop teachers from leaving classroom and lobbying at state level en-masse!!

Item #2: Fire all teachers on the spot that walk out of classroom or strike after signing work contract. No exemptions!!

Item #3: Stop and eliminate all personal leave days allowed teachers during 9 months teaching term to save money both at state and local level. Not only does school have to pay teachers they must pay substitutes too. Allow only hospitalization sick leave as paid leave when verified with hospital stay.

Item #4: Get away from Humanistic guidelines of NEA and instill more basics and discipline of students back into our system.

Item #5: Get rid of AIM plan and rely on textbooks which must be graded on 4 or 5 major testing areas (California test, Iowa, etc.) for methods and plans and take excessive paperwork off our good teachers.

Item #6: Eliminate public kindergartens which are nothing but additional expense to taxpayers and detrimental to younger children in the long run. Studies are showing that contrary to what the public has been led to believe, that younger 5 year olds are not mature enough to be injected with 1st grade material and it is causing psychological problems later due to the stress. The old concept that holding children out for a year and not starting them at an early 5 year age is working better. This is a program that has been sold to the public by the educational interest that is not worth the price the taxpayer is being mandated to pay.

Item #7: Get back to the basic courses in the classroom and do away with Humanistics Extra Curricular garbage and Extra-Cost!! Install accelerated student program and cut deadwood students out of Hold Basic situations. All students are not college material -- but can use vocational or skill jobs and be taxpayers and wage earners.